

# UNAMI Herald

Volume 11, Issue 1

January — February 2024



## With Middle East at a 'critical juncture', UN Iraq envoy appeals for restraint

**New York, 06 February 2024** - Attacks originating both within and outside Iraq have the potential to unravel hard-won stability and other achievements if they continue, the head of the UN Mission in the country, UNAMI, warned the Security Council on Tuesday.

"With the conflict raging in Gaza, as well as armed action elsewhere, the Middle East is at a critical juncture, and the same is true for Iraq," said UN Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, calling for restraint.

"With Iraq cloaked in an already complex tapestry of challenges; it is of greatest importance that all attacks cease."

### 'Enabling environment' crucial

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert told ambassadors that "an enabling environment" will be essential for Iraq to continue on the path of stability, which requires restraint from all sides.

"Yes, indeed, from Iraq's armed actors, and, as might be expected, restraint from Iraq's neighbours and other countries is just as crucial," she said.

The envoy recalled that she has repeatedly said that "messaging by strikes only serves to recklessly heighten tensions, to kill or injure people and to destroy property."

### Prioritize safeguarding Iraq

As an example, she pointed to the 28 January attack that killed three US service members, and injured several others, alongside the resulting retaliatory strikes.

"Rather than shows of force, all efforts should centre on safeguarding Iraq from being drawn in any way into a wider conflict," she said, noting that Iran also carried out a deadly missile attack on Erbil a few weeks back while Turkish military operations continue in the north.

Regarding "the incendiary potential of retaliatory strikes", she welcomed the recent launch of talks between US and Iraqi military officials, noting



that "the setting of joint objectives could only be a positive development amid rising tensions."

### Successes and challenges

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert also reported on positive developments in Iraq. Last December, local elections were held for the first time in a decade, which also marked the first vote in the Kirkuk governorate since 2005.

"This electoral process took place in a broadly peaceful and technically sound manner. It marked another milestone in the Government's efforts to break from past cycles of dysfunction. And we truly hope that the re-establishment of local representative bodies, which have been inactive since 2019, will signify another major step forward," she said.

However, challenges for future elections persist, namely securing higher voter turnout and encouraging those eligible to register, requiring greater work towards building public trust.

### Banking and buildings

The Council also heard of other positive developments, such as the Iraqi Government's efforts to strengthen the finance and banking sectors. "Ambitious construction projects" also continue, such as major housing complexes, along with a commitment to build a thousand new schools by the end of the year.

Yet, Iraq faces obstacles, including

"existing feelings of exclusion and marginalization" which often lead to recurring cycles of conflict.

Furthermore, parliamentary elections in the autonomous Kurdistan region in the north have also been postponed several times since October 2022, with a new date to be set. "And wrangling between Baghdad and Erbil on financial and budgetary issues goes on," she added.

### Closing all camps

Regarding other matters, she reported that Iraq's Council of Ministers has set 30 July as the date for the closure of all displacement camps throughout the country, including in the Kurdistan region, some of which are hosting people with alleged ties to ISIL.

While welcoming the decision, the UN has underscored that it should be complemented with solutions for displaced people outside the camps, while all returns should be safe, voluntary, dignified and inclusive.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert concluded her briefing by noting that it could be the last time she addressed the Council as she is expected to leave office in May after serving for five years.

She expressed hope that one day, people from around the world will get to know the real Iraq - "a country of rich diversity and culture, where there are many opportunities to grasp."

By UN News.

## In this edition ...

### Iraq brings women to the table to prevent violent extremism

**Baghdad, 12 February 2024** - As the world marks 12 February as the International Day of the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), Iraq stands at a pivotal moment in its own battle against violent extremism. The newly launched Iraqi Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Working Group invites a female perspective on addressing the root causes of violent extremism.

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### DSRSG Cordone encourages Iraqis to support women's participation in politics

**Baghdad, 29 January 2024** - At the launch of a joint report on strengthening the participation and representation of Iraqi women in political and electoral processes, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, encouraged Iraqis to consider its recommendations and build on existing good practices to support women's participation in politics.

*More on page 16.*

### DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai visits Bzebiz informal IDP site

**Anbar, 27 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, and IOM Iraq, met with IDPs at Bzebiz informal IDP site in Anbar and listened to their concerns and challenges.

*More on page 31.*

### UNITAD hands over a landmark case assessment report to the Iraqi Judiciary: unveiling the structure of ISIL's Bayt Al Mal

**Baghdad, 12 February 2024** - Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Mr. Christian Ritscher handed over, today to the Iraqi judiciary, a new case assessment report on the "Structure of Diwan Bayt al-Mal (2014-2017)".

*More on page 25.*

### Joint programme launched to stimulate decent work and affordable housing in Iraq

**Baghdad, 21 February 2024** - A multi-partner programme to foster decent work opportunities for Iraqi youth and addressing the need for affordable housing, especially among lower-income and vulnerable populations was launched in Baghdad today.

The European Union has provided 20 million Euros to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to support the four-year programme, titled "Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT): Towards Decent Work and Affordable Housing in Iraq". *More on page 57.*

**SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert: "Iraq is increasingly well positioned as an arena for dialogue and investment."**

**Baghdad, 24 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today the Sixth Baghdad International Dialogue.

*The text of her speech at this event starts on page 13.*

### UN Special Representative of Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict concludes official visit to Iraq

**Baghdad/New York, 12 January 2024** - The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSR CAAC), Ms. Virginia Gamba, conducted her first visit to Iraq from 7 to 11 January 2024 to commend the progress made by the Iraqi Government on the protection of conflict-affected children and to engage with the Government on areas in which the United Nations may offer further support.

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

SCPIO Director: Samir Ghattas

Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

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

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

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

## SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert told ambassadors that “an enabling environment” will be essential for Iraq to continue on the path of stability, which requires restraint from all sides



**New York, 06 February 2024** – On its 9543rd meeting United Nations Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq.

Here is the text of the briefing of 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:

“Thank you, Madam President, Distinguished members of the Security Council, With the conflict raging in Gaza, as well as armed action elsewhere, the Middle East is at a critical juncture. And, the same is true for Iraq. Now to be clear: Iraq’s Government’s efforts are focused on avoiding a domestic (and regional) spillover. Still, continued attacks have become a harsh reality. And, these attacks originate from within and outside of the country’s borders. Attacks which, if they were to continue, stand to undo Iraq’s hard-won stability, as well as other achievements made in the past 18 months.

Now, as we all know, history can have a long tail. One which can impact the present. And, this is searingly true for the Middle East. To fully grasp the current regional and domestic dynamics, therefore, we would need to traverse decades - an exercise this briefing does not allow for.

That said, it is within this context that various Iraqi armed groups (groups acting outside state control, that is) reference, as a justification for their operations, a doctrine which transcends politics and state borders. Other motivations expressed pertain specifically to Iraq, such as calls for

Iraqi skies to be, and I quote, “free”, and for an end to the international military presence in the country.

However, for Iraq to further continue on its path of stability and progress, an enabling environment will prove essential. And, such an environment requires restraint from all sides.

Yes, indeed, from Iraq’s armed actors. And, as might be expected, restraint from Iraq’s neighbours and other countries is just as crucial.

I have said it numerous times in the past and will say it again: messaging by strikes only serves to heighten tensions, to kill or injure people and to destroy property.

A case in point was the attack on 28 January, which killed and injured US service members. This was seen again, with the retaliatory strikes on 2 February, which also resulted in casualties.

But rather than resorting to the use of force, all efforts should centre on safeguarding Iraq from being drawn in any way into a wider conflict.

And it is precisely within this context that many expressed shock over Iran’s missile attack on Erbil a few weeks ago, which killed civilians - including a little girl. Based on accusations the Iraqi Government has strongly refuted, these actions were sorely at odds with the great efforts made on the Iraq-Iran security agreement, which I highlighted in my October briefing.

Meanwhile, Turkish military operations in the North also continue. Just because these attacks have become the new “normal” does not mean that they do not seriously compound the risk of new arenas of violence being opened.

Now, when talking about the

incendiary potential of retaliatory strikes, we would like to welcome the recent launch of dialogue through the United States-Iraq Higher Military Commission.

This dialogue channel opened at a critical moment. And, the setting of joint objectives could only be a positive development amid rising tensions.

Having said all this today, I am compelled to reiterate our appeal to all sides to exercise maximum restraint. With Iraq cloaked in an already complex tapestry of challenges, it is of greatest importance that all attacks cease.

While we are (of course) aware that many authorities and actors seek to limit further escalation, it is clear that the situation remains volatile. Iraq (indeed, the wider region) remains on a knife-edge, with the tiniest miscalculation threatening a major conflagration.

Now, on a more optimistic note, Madam President, on 18 December 2023, Iraq held local elections for the first time in 10 years. And, in the case of Kirkuk, for the first time since 2005.

This electoral process took place in a broadly peaceful and technically sound manner. It marked another milestone in the Government’s efforts to break from past cycles of dysfunction. And we truly hope that the re-establishment of local representative bodies, which have been inactive since 2019, will signify another major step forward.

Now, a challenge for future elections will be to rally a higher voter turnout and, importantly, to encourage Iraq’s eligible voters to register.

While turnout among registered voters for the 2023 governorate council elections was on par with Iraq’s national parliamentary elections (two years prior) around 60 per cent of registered voters did not cast their ballots.

And this, combined with the fact that millions of Iraqis did not even register to begin with, spotlights the magnitude of the challenge that lies ahead. Building public trust, and thus encouraging the majority of Iraq’s eligible voters to participate in the democratic process, will entail continuous and hard work.

Another positive development to report on is that Iraq’s Government

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

continues to strengthen the country’s finance and banking sectors.

Mergers and structural reforms of key insurance and banking entities, demonstrate - yet again - the Government’s commitment to nurturing a transparent, compliant financial sector in Iraq.

Steps taken to strengthen public financial management, including by establishing a single treasury account, have also been welcomed by the IMF and others.

Now, alongside new electronic platforms for foreign currency sales, which I mentioned in my last briefing, these initiatives are set to be instrumental in enhancing the transparency and manageability of Iraq’s public finances.

Meanwhile, ambitious construction projects continue apace. These have included major housing complexes, which will, I hope, be open to all Iraqis.

Similarly, a government commitment to build a thousand new schools by the end of 2024, if realized, would be a real opportunity accelerator. And national incentives for development projects, like special loans and exemptions, also indicate the Government’s determination to see these and other visions take concrete shape.

Next month Iraq will become the first country in the region to join the International Labour Organization’s Convention on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. Coupled with the new national social security law, this sets a regional precedent for employee protection which should benefit Iraqi workers, especially women. And, such standard-setting and benefit expansion must also be seen as part of efforts to strengthen Iraq’s private sector.

Now, these and other reforms, as I have said before, are critical to unlocking a brighter future for all Iraqis. A future in which the country can move from fighting fires to crafting sustainable solutions. A future in which young people can use their skills and capacities to better their lives and communities, rather than taking to the streets out of desperation, or worse: taking up arms.

Madam President, let me hone in on a few other issues.

Firstly, climate change. Iraq’s participation in the COP28 Summit



in December produced some promising commitments. These included a complete phase-out of gas flaring by 2028 and the establishment of a new green sustainable bank to diversify the Iraqi economy away from fossil fuels.

A slew of projects to incentivize water conservation and sustainability across various sectors, as well as promised investments in clean energy exploration, also augur well for the future.

Now, when it comes to climate change, cries from global platforms have increasingly formed a crescendo of doom. And, in Iraq, it is not hard to see why. Water scarcity, desertification, forced migration, conflict over natural resources, extreme weather events – they all combine to paint a rather bleak picture in which existing fault lines come under increasing pressure.

But instead of giving into a sense of despair, and as emphasized by Iraq’s Prime Minister, focus must now shift to mitigation and adaptation. For instance, through the implementation of inclusive, peace-positive environmental management programmes, the modernization of irrigation infrastructure, and immediate steps to reduce oil reliance. That said, without moving from promises to actions, opportunities may slip away - and fast.

Secondly, I wish to again highlight existing feelings of exclusion and marginalization - which, as we all know, often lead to recurring cycles of conflict. Managing diversity is never easy, but if done well represents a major win in preventing instability,

mistrust and violence, and in promoting respect for human rights. Key to this is the rule of law. Of course, if justice systems are seen to be treating people in discriminatory ways, tensions among communities can quickly boil over.

Madam President, as you know, in mid-November, a ruling of the Federal Supreme Court suddenly ended the term of Iraq’s Parliamentary Speaker. Today, nearly three months later, political bickering continues to prevent consensus on his replacement. Needless to say: we can only hope that an agreement will emerge - sooner rather than later.

On the Kurdistan Region, I regret to report that the Region’s parliamentary elections have again been held up. Initially scheduled for October ‘22, they were postponed to November ‘23 then further delayed to February of this year. And we are now awaiting a new date.

Let me be clear: these continued postponements do not help already low trust levels, nor do they contribute to Iraq’s stability.

And, wrangling between Baghdad and Erbil on financial and budgetary issues goes on. While acknowledging that there are various difficult and technical issues at play, this does not change the fact that, in the absence of a sustainable agreement, it is the everyday people who suffer.

The recent decision of the federal Government to approve the financing of the Region for the month of January, in accordance with the federal budget for the year 2024, is, of course, to be welcomed. But we can only reiterate that a more permanent

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

solution is desperately needed. In simple terms: if stability is to be preserved, the Kurdistan Region must receive funding to pay its civil servants their monthly salaries.

Meanwhile, UN Iraq continues to evolve. The Mission’s Independent Strategic Review is ongoing. And the Country Team has shifted (as you know) from a humanitarian to a development focus – And of course, a new UN Cooperation Framework is on its way, which will support national priorities and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

We wish to mention that Iraq’s Council of Ministers has set 30 July 2024 as the date for the closure of all displacement camps throughout the country, including the Kurdistan Region.

This decision is welcome as it defines concrete steps, establishes mechanisms and dedicates government funding to the goal of ending displacement.

Having said this, UN Iraq underscores that this decision should be complemented by solutions for displaced people outside camps. Equally important is ensuring all returns and relocations are informed, safe, voluntary, dignified and inclusive, and pursued in cooperation and coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Madam President, turning to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

The Government of Iraq remains undoubtedly committed to this file. But with 308 missing persons still unaccounted for, swifter progress is needed. And, this must involve the dismantling of bureaucratic hurdles

and immediate follow-up on outstanding issues.

There is also a clear need to redouble efforts to locate and return missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. What we are essentially saying is that it is in everybody’s interest to show a sense of urgency so as to bring this important file to a close.

Madam President, what is needed now? As I have said many times: no government can go it alone. Hence, we can only hope that each and every one of Iraq’s politicians will continue working to put the country on the clearest path to success, in the best interests of all Iraqis, whatever their affiliation, background or ethnicity. And the same goes for any other actor, in- or outside Iraq: they are expected to support this objective, rather than to thwart it.

One thing is for sure: the need for sustainable progress, for real reform, for better living standards will not decline. Iraq’s population grows every year, driving even more demand for jobs, housing, water and other essential services. While many of the plans on the Government’s books hold the key to meeting these needs, they will become more and more difficult to realize with each year that passes. And, so, the time to act is now.

In closing, Madam President, let me once again stress the importance of an enabling environment and thus the urgent need to cease attacks, be they originating from within or outside of Iraq’s borders. And, as stated many times in past years, this must include reining in armed actors operating outside state control.

It is quite simple: the enormous risks and potential devastating consequences of continued escalation

cannot be overstated. And this is, again, true for Iraq, the region and beyond.

Last but not least, in December 2018 I arrived in Baghdad. Now, five years later, it is almost time for me to say goodbye. I expect to depart from this position at the end of May. And, this is not easy, I have to say. Through the many highs and lows, Iraq simply has become part of me. That said, today’s briefing could very well be my last address to the Security Council on Iraq.

And, while it is tempting to look back and reflect, I am conscious of time constraints, of course, but please allow me to use this opportunity to thank both the Council and Iraq’s authorities for their support, and to express my vast appreciation for each and every one of my UN Iraq colleagues. Most importantly, I wish to thank the people of Iraq for their boundless hospitality, their generosity and their kindness. Wherever I go, they will always have a special place in my heart.

And I can only hope that one day, inshallah, people from around the world will get to know the real Iraq.

A country of immense beauty. A country of rich diversity and culture, where there are so many opportunities to grasp.

Now, let me end by publicly paying tribute to all Iraqi men and women. For their sacrifices, their strength and the depth of their commitment to building a prosperous, democratic and peaceful Iraq.

عاش العراق

Long live Iraq

Thank you.”



### Political Situation

## Statement by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq

**Baghdad, 20 January 2024** - The Middle East is at a critical juncture, with the conflict raging in Gaza and armed action elsewhere threatening a major conflagration.

Iraq is at risk of being drawn even further into this conflict. Despite the Government’s efforts to prevent the escalation of tensions, continued attacks - originating from within and

outside of Iraq’s borders stand to undo the hard-won stability of the country and the achievements it has made in recent years.

All United Nations efforts are focused on seeking an end to the Gaza conflict and avoiding a regional spillover. The Secretary-General has repeatedly called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the delivery of

sustained relief, and the full respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and the unconditional release of all hostages.

Iraq’s stability and security are front and center in all our engagements. We reiterate our appeal to all sides to exercise maximum restraint.

## Statement from UNAMI on misinformation regarding the departure of SRSG Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert

**Baghdad, 14 February 2024** - UNAMI would like to set the record straight regarding the recent circulation of misleading reports in various Iraqi traditional and social media outlets concerning the departure of Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission

for Iraq (UNAMI), in May. UNAMI emphasizes that the SRSG's departure in May aligns with usual practices within the United Nations, including the standard rotation of senior UN officials. With regard to The Guardian's report about allegations of corruption, UNDP has issued a statement on 23 January 2024. Furthermore, we would like to

underscore that UNAMI and UNDP have different governance and financial structures.

We urge media outlets to prioritize accuracy and refrain from disseminating misleading information. More broadly, the impact of mis- and disinformation cannot be overstated.



### Social Cohesion

## Iraq brings women to the table to prevent violent extremism

**Baghdad, 12 February 2024** - As the world marks 12 February as the International Day of the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), Iraq stands at a pivotal moment in its own battle against violent extremism. The newly launched Iraqi Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Working Group invites a female perspective on addressing the root causes of violent extremism.

The Women's Working Group reaffirms that women's inclusion and representation in decision-making processes is essential. Understanding the different roles and experiences of men, women, boys and girls is vital, but often overlooked when designing PVE efforts. Established by the Office of the National Security Advisory in their capacity as chair of the National PVE Committee, the working group is comprised of diverse representatives from national and sub-national government units and academics.

At the launch of the Working Group in late January, Dr. Wijdan Azim Abdul Hussein, a member of the team from Al-Mustansiriya University, emphasized the pivotal role of women in this endeavor. She stated, "Today's workshop is a founding workshop for this team, and it is proposed that the team be made up of a group of active Iraqi women at the national academic level, at the local community level, at the level of international organizations and humanitarian organizations."

Engineer Shahla Al-Bayati, Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Preventing Violent Extremism in Salah al-Din Governorate, shared her personal motivation, saying, "My entry into the field of protecting women from all kinds of negative phenomena [resulted from when] we were under siege for three months by [Daesh]. I decided that we would have women leaders who could help and educate women."

The group's strategies focus on creating safe and inclusive spaces for women to engage in discussions and initiatives to prevent violent extremism and advance Iraqi women's participation in the National PVE strategy. Al-Bayati highlighted the importance of tailoring approaches to different segments of society, stating, "In the beginning, we must identify each segment we work with individually, such as the segment of housewives, with whom we work individually with special programs, academies in particular, and young women in another."

The overarching goal of the Women's Working Group is to empower Iraqi women to take a leading role in preventing violent extremism. "The basic issue is to emphasize the role of women in the analysis of women's significant role in confronting, combating, and basically preventing violent extremism in societies," said Dr. Wijdan Azim Abdul Hussein.

Al-Bayati added, "We must make these women leaders who can help a group of

other women, so that the work can be sustainable, and our work will continue to combat violent extremism in the long term."

Noor Al-Naser is a Senior Preventing Violent Extremism Programme Officer for at the International Organization for Migration; she is actively managing PVE technical partners and the rehabilitation pillar of IOM's work with returnees from northeast Syria.

The International Organization for Migration in Iraq is helping Iraq navigate the complexities of preventing extremism by spearheading working groups such as this one, in close coordination with the Office of the National Security Advisory. "Cooperation with the GoI is very important and a positive thing in our work," said Noor Al-Naser, a Senior Preventing Violent Extremism Programme Officer at IOM, "and if it were not for the cooperation with the governmental and non-governmental bodies...we would not have achieved what we have achieved so far."

Since 2020, IOM has worked in partnership with the Government of Iraq and community members to develop programmes and strategies to address the root causes of violent extremism. IOM applies a whole-of-society approach that includes national and sub-national government units as well as civil society and community members. Successful PVE efforts must diversify interventions, prioritize local research, and emphasize the roles of various actors in enhancing community resilience.

Iraq's Women's Working Group embodies resilience, determination, and collaboration in the face of violent extremism. With their unwavering commitment and diverse perspectives, these women are not just agents of change but the architects of a brighter, more peaceful future for Iraq.

Thanks to the Government of Canada for supporting the launch of the PVE National Women's Working Group.

By Rafal Abdulateef, Senior Public Information Assistant, IOM



## Iraq has made major strides in the prevention of violent extremism



**Mosul/New York, 14 February 2024** - The second anniversary of the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) comes with major achievements in Iraq since the launch of the National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism in 2019, which has been supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) since 2020.

Violent extremism in Iraq once led to widespread devastation and mass displacement, with marginalized groups such as women, children, young people, and persons with disabilities disproportionately affected. The Government of Iraq is proactively taking steps to ensure a resilient society free from all forms of violent extremism. This included the tabling of resolution 77/243 by the Iraqi representative to the United Nations which introduced the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism. The designation was approved by the General Assembly in December 2022 and underscores the shared responsibility of the international community in addressing these critical issues and demands global commitment to principles of peaceful coexistence and the promotion of moderation and tolerance.

"Iraq has made major strides towards our shared vision for a safe and prosperous Iraq, free from all forms of violent extremism. I commend the

Government of Iraq for their proactive efforts and leadership," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Giorgi Gigauri, during an interactive event on the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to terrorism, at the United Nations Headquarters New York, organized by the Iraqi Government. "As Iraq begins the next chapter of its development, we will continue to provide support to operationalize its National Strategy; these efforts are fundamental to addressing the root causes of violent extremism and building strong, resilient, and prosperous communities for all Iraqis."

IOM is the first international organization to formally partner with the Government of Iraq on the implementation of the National PVE Strategy. Since 2020, IOM works in partnership with the Government of Iraq, and community members, to develop whole-of-society programs and strategies to address the root causes of violent extremism. Through this cooperation, several major milestones have been achieved:

- In January 2024, recognizing the importance of women's leadership and inclusion in the prevention of violent extremism, the Iraqi Government launched the Iraqi Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, with the support of IOM.

- In 2023, IOM supported the development and launch of seven plans of action, which localize and contextualize the National PVE Strategy to the district level. IOM is continuing to support their implementation through technical assistance and joint activities with the government led sub-committees.

- In 2022, IOM established the Wasl Civil Society Fund that has since supported 41 civil society organizations to deliver 50 projects, catalyzing community led initiatives that address drivers of instability, displacement, and violent extremism.

- Since 2020, close to 900 government officials, civil society representatives, and community leaders were equipped with technical assistance to identify and respond to the needs of their communities.

- To effectively respond to the evolving and localized drivers of violent extremism, IOM Iraq has published more than 30 targeted evidence-based research papers, policy documents, and advocacy materials.

"Iraq developed a comprehensive strategy and we continue to take steps in the right direction in the prevention of violent extremism and the hate speech that has produced nothing but destruction in our country. The International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism is an international message that Iraq contributed to and set the foundation for to foster joint efforts on prevention of violent extremism, and become a beacon for peace and tolerance. We are keen on fighting any form of violent extremism that threatens to harm our country, people and our social cohesion." said Mr. Qasim al-Araji, the National Security Advisor.

Violent extremism does not respect borders and demands joint action and cooperation from the global community. IOM is grateful for the unwavering support from our international donors and partners to this important cause.

## UNDP participates and shares some of its key milestones in supporting the Government's efforts to Prevent Violent Extremism

**Baghdad, 19 February 2023** - UNDP represented by the Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Regional Director at the Regional Bureau for

Arab States, Marina Walter, was delighted to participate and share some of its key milestones in supporting the Government of Iraq's efforts to Prevent

Violent Extremism through the leadership of the National Committee for Preventing Violence Extremism at the National Security Advisor (ONSA).

## Preventing violent extremism in Iraq - 7 ways UNDP Iraq is working with Government and communities

**Baghdad, 21 February 2024** - This week on 12th February, we celebrate the 2nd International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) as and when Conducive to Terrorism, since its establishment in December 2022.

This day raises awareness of the threats linked to violent extremism – which according to the UN Secretary-General undermines peace, security, human rights, and sustainable development.

Since overcoming the ISIL insurgency in 2014; PVE remains extremely important to Iraq so much so that its government was at the forefront of advocating for the United Nations to designate this day as a UN Day. The Government of Iraq has shown leadership in ensuring that every effort is made to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) within its borders.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq is cooperating with the leadership of the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) to institute preventive measures that address violent extremism.

Our joint efforts are supported through our Social Cohesion Pillar, under which we are working with Government and local entities to promote the reintegration of returnees from North East Syria, internally displaced persons, promoting social cohesion and preventing violence extremism in communities PVE thus, enhancing peaceful co-existence. The infographic below shows what UNDP is supporting through Social Cohesion, and PVE features prominently in the work we are doing in Iraq. We use a community-level and community supported approach that remains vigilant in the prevention of violent extremism, whilst working towards lasting and sustainable peace in local communities

that are vulnerable to this threat.

Through this work, we have trained close to 500 local Government counterparts in social cohesion, reintegration, PVE, and providing mental health support services. UNDP also supported the establishment of 24 local peace committees in areas of return and trained close to 900 journalists regarding their role in peacebuilding and fighting hate speech. In my visits to districts like Ba'aj and Hatra in Ninewa Governorate which were used as terrorist bases during the conflict with ISIL, I have seen first-hand the impact of our work in building back community bonds. In these areas, UNDP has supported the implementation of 150 community initiatives.

These initiatives are tangible, impactful and have ensured rapid progress towards peaceful communities through partnership with the local tribal mechanisms. Our role as UNDP is to support the process of empowering communities through social cohesion programmes and initiatives. There can be no development without peace and there can be no peace without development.

This, however, is only a snippet of our work in this area. For this blog, I will highlight seven ways our work in social cohesion is preventing violent extremism in Iraq.

### 1- Developed Comprehensive Plans of Action (PoAs)

In collaboration with local stakeholders at the Governorate level, we supported the development of comprehensive PoAs targeting seven (7) governorates most affected by violent extremism. These PoAs are important as they set the national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complement national PVE strategies. Eight (8) more plans will be

developed in eight more Governorates will be reached in 2024. These action plans are essentially roadmaps to ensure that governorates are proactive in responding to drivers of PVE.

### 2- Capacity Building for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

Recognizing the pivotal role of civil society, we trained and equipped 60 Civil Society Organization (CSOs) across all 15 governorates with the necessary skills to implement PVE initiatives outlined in the PoAs. Selected CSOs have successfully executed 27 community-based initiatives across seven Governorates, contributing to grassroots efforts in countering violent extremism. UNDP works through CSOs to ensure that localization through strategic partnerships can carry forward the great work being done at the national and local levels.

### 3- Empowerment of Youth and Women:

Since 2021, we have been working to empower the youth and women in Iraq to understand PVE concepts, mobilise groups and establish networks to promote social cohesion. 200 youth and women have been trained and in turn, have implemented over 100 community-based initiatives reaching over 22,500 beneficiaries in the last three years. This has resulted in more confidence among the youth and women to take up leadership roles, for example a women's group is providing pro bono legal services to women and young girls in their communities. While another group organised an exhibition to showcase women's home-made products with the support of UNDP at a local bazaar in Kirkuk – this support has improved household income for them.

It is important for women and youth to take a front seat in ensuring that communities are working toward peace and preventing the resurgence of violent extremism. They are the future of Iraq.

### 4- Enhanced IT Skills for Sub-committees:

To bolster data management capabilities, we supported 15 sub-committees at the governorate level to enhance their IT skills. These have enabled them to effectively manage and publish PVE-related data to relevant authorities, strengthening informed decision-making related to this critical issue.

### 5- Addressing the Link Between Climate Change and Violent Extremism:



Preventing violent extremism in Iraq - 7 ways UNDP Iraq is working with Government and communities (continued)



Climate change has affected the way communities live, leading to displacement, and migration due to decreased natural resources leading to tension in communities. To delve deeper into these issues, we partnered with ONSA to organise a national conference in 2023 to address the critical link between climate change, migration, and violent extremism. Key stakeholders from different government ministries discussed its impact on PVE efforts and likely solutions on how climate change negatively affects migration patterns, livelihoods and opportunities which can lead to the resurgence of violent extremism.

6- Promotion of Moderate Religious Discourse:

Recognizing their influential roles in promoting peace and discouraging communities against violent

extremism, we organised several dialogues for tribal, religious, and community leaders through our work with sub-committees at the Governorate level. These have provided spaces for open discourse, emphasizing the rejection of violent extremism across all religions and ethnic groups. As a result, 136 religious leaders were sensitized on moderate religious discourse to foster community cohesion, and help communities focus on what unites them rather than what divides them.

7- Reintegration and Support for Returnees:

Working under the Global Framework on Supporting the return of Iraqi Nationals from Northeast Syria, UNDP, and the wider UN System are working with the Iraqi government to reintegrate over 25,000 Iraqi nationals

from refugee camps in Northeast Syria. In 2023, we supported 3,925 returnees and internally displaced persons with livelihood options and rehabilitated 801 houses. In 2024, we aim to continue supporting reintegration efforts, focusing on providing essential support to affected families, including housing, livelihood, and mental health services. These efforts actively contribute to durable solutions, ensuring safe and dignified returns to areas of origin that have available basic and essential services.

Through our collaborative interventions in Iraq, we are enabling the Government, Civil Society, local leaders, youth, and women to be a part of addressing the root causes of PVE – enabling every member of the community to be part of Iraq’s journey to lasting peace and sustainable development.

We thank our partners including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU), and the Governments of Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Japan, and Germany for enabling us to carry out this important tangible and results-orientes work, as UNDP works to operationalize the Humanitarian Development and Peace Nexus, creating clear paths from humanitarian to development in Iraq.

By Auke Lootsma, Resident Representative, UNDP Iraq

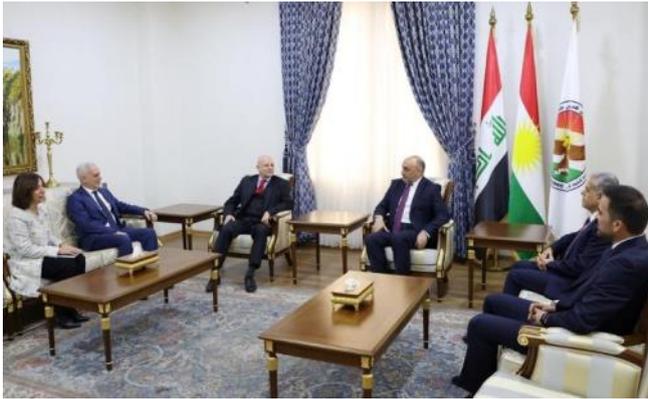
Political Consultations



Erbil, 9 January 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Good discussion with Kurdistan Regional Government Deputy Prime Minister **Qubad Talabani** in Erbil today to review latest developments including relations with Baghdad and Kurdistan Region elections".



Erbil, 9 January 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Discussing with Kurdistan Regional Government Minister of the Interior, **Réber Ahmed**, issues relevant to the KRI, including the Sinjar agreement whose implementation needs to be revived following the recent Governorates Council elections".



**Erbil, 9 January 2024** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Discussing with KRI President's Chief of Staff, **Mr. Fawzi Hariri**, the next steps to facilitate the holding of the Kurdistan Region Parliament's elections as soon as possible".



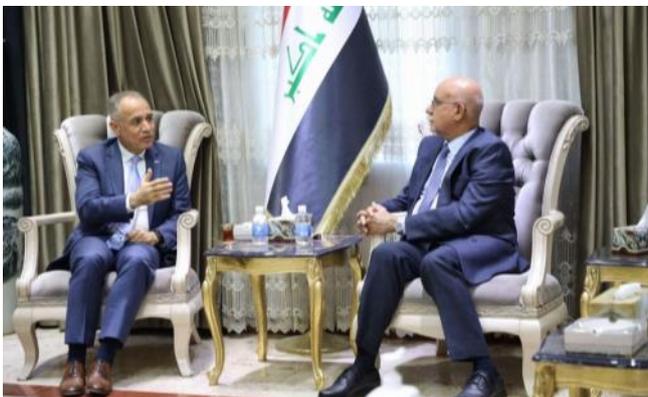
**Erbil, 10 January 2024** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "In coordination with federal and KR authorities, today I visited 3 camps for Iranian Kurdish opposition groups in Kurdistan Region. Their representatives affirmed commitment to civilian status and requested assistance. UNAMI supports continued Iraq-Iran dialogue on border security".



**Baghdad, 11 January 2024** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Congratulating judge **Omar Mohammed** IHEC Chair on the successful conduct of the Governorate Councils elections while waiting for the final certification of the results. Time now to focus on the Kurdistan parliamentary elections - need a new date as soon as possible".



**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, **Mr. Mohammed Ali Tamim**, discussing the development of the new 5-year Cooperation Framework between UNIraq and the Government of Iraq in support of national priorities and acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as durable solutions for IDPs. Photo courtesy of the Iraq Ministry of Planning.



**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Ghulam Mohamad Isaczai**, met today with Iraq's Health Minister, **Dr. Salih Al-Hasnawi**, and emphasized the strong UN-Iraq collaboration within the new 5-year UN Cooperation Framework for Iraq (UNSDCF), including on the health sector and the Sustainable Development Goals. Photo courtesy of the Iraq Ministry of Health.



**Baghdad, 16 January 2024** - Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Ghulam Isaczai**, along with UNICEF and UNESCO, had a productive meeting with Iraq's Minister of Education, **Mr. Ibrahim Namis Al-Jubouri**. Discussions focused on advancing the educational sector, digitalization, increasing budget allocations, and supporting education for IDPs, returnees, and refugees.



**Baghdad, 18 January 2024** - Today, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, met in Baghdad with Iraq National Security Advisor, **Mr. Qasim Al-Araji**. The DSRSG briefed Mr. Araji on his recent visit to three camps for Iranian Kurdish opposition groups in the Kurdistan Region, coordinated with the Federal and Kurdistan Region authorities. They also discussed other security issues and the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations.  
Photo courtesy of the NSA Media Office.

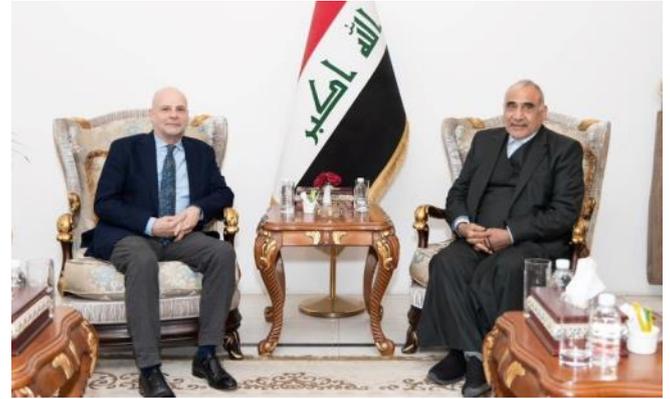


**Baghdad, 18 January 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, discussed today with Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, **Mr. Mohammad Kazem Al Sadegh**, security issues including the implementation of the Iraq-Iran security agreement relating to Iranian Kurdish opposition groups. DSRSG Cordone reiterated UN call for diplomatic rather than military means to address security concerns.  
Photo courtesy of the Iranian Embassy – Iraq.



**Baghdad, 23 January 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, today attended the celebration of the **Iraqi Judiciary Day**. An independent and strong judiciary is a key safeguard for good governance and human rights.

Photo courtesy of the Supreme Judicial Council.



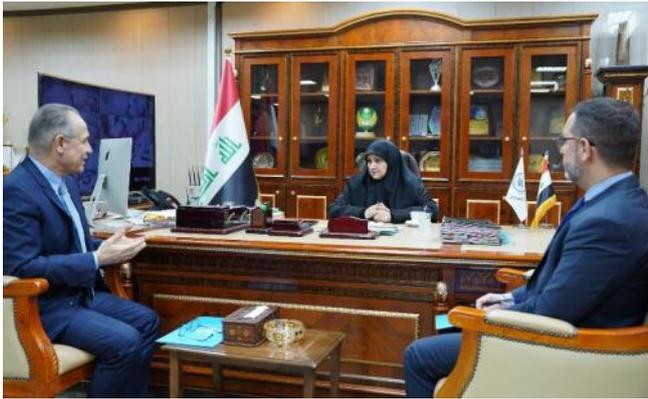
**Baghdad, 25 January 2024** - Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Benefitting today from the perspectives of former Prime Minister **Adil Abdul-Mahdi** on national and regional issues and UNIraq's role".



**Baghdad, 01 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Head of Al-Hikma National Movement, **Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim**. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country and the region.  
Photo courtesy of the AHNM.



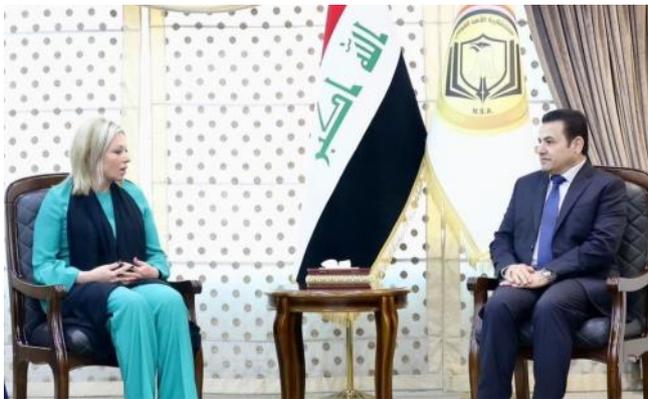
**Erbil, 15 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, met today in Erbil with **Mr. Rêber Ahmed**, Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government.  
Photo courtesy of the KRG.



**Baghdad, 15 February 2024** - Productive discussions today as the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/ Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, and Iraq Minister of Communication, **Ms. Hayam Al-Yassiri**, met to explore leveraging ICT for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and economic growth. They further outlined next steps to enhancing joint cooperation on digital transformation and digitalization in Iraq through UN Cooperation Framework (2025-2029).  
Photo courtesy of the Iraqi Ministry of Communication.



**Baghdad, 19 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met in Baghdad with **Mr. Fakhri Karim**, President of Al-Mada Foundation for Media, Culture and Arts.



**Baghdad, 20 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today in Baghdad with the National Security Adviser, **Mr. Qassim Al-Araji**. They discussed the current political and security developments in the country and the region.

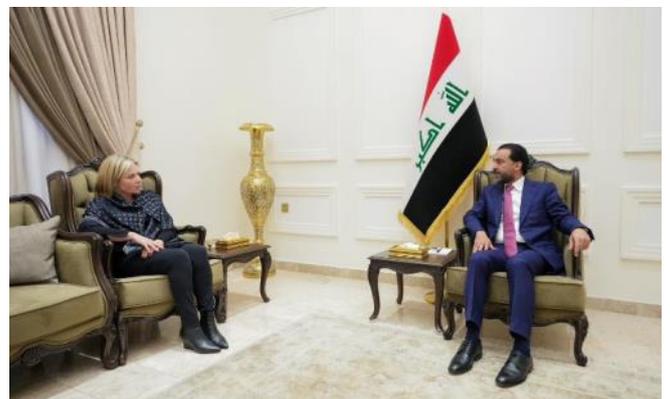
Photo courtesy of the NSA Media Office.



**Erbil, 20 February 2024** - UNAMI Electoral team, led by the **Principal Electoral Adviser**, together with IHEC, participated in a meeting with the KRG Presidency Office in Erbil during which the electoral operational timeline and other aspects of holding Kurdistan parliamentary elections were discussed.



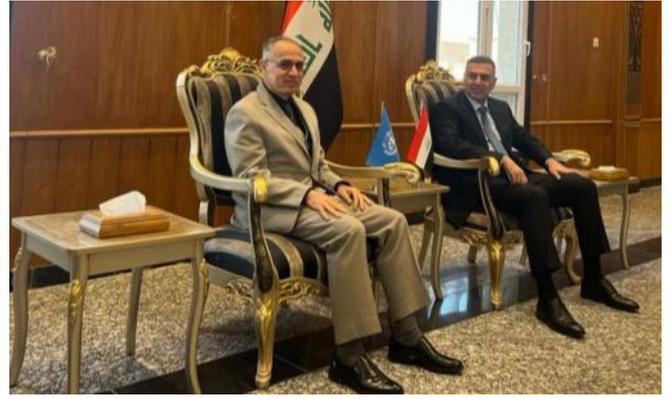
**Baghdad, 22 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today in Baghdad with **Mr. Khamis Al-Khanjar**, Head of the Sovereignty Alliance. They discussed the current political developments in the country.  
Photo courtesy of Sovereignty Alliance Media Office.



**Baghdad, 22 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today in Baghdad with former Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament and Head of the Taqaddam Party, **Mr. Muhammad Al-Halbousi**. They discussed the current political developments in the country.  
Photo courtesy of the Taqaddam Party Media Office.



**Halabja, 22 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, visited **Halabja Monument** and Peace Museum yesterday and paid respect to victims of March 1988 chemical attack. Reflecting on this tragic event, he reaffirmed UNIraq's commitment to peace and security of all Iraqis.



**Basra, 29 February 2024** – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai** met today with Basra Governor, **Mr. Asaad Al Eidani**, and congratulated him on his reelection as a Governor. Discussions focused on enhancing cooperation to address climate change impact in southern Iraq and emphasized collaboration for a sustainable future.



**Erbil, 29 February 2024** - Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today in Erbil with **Mr. Qubad Talabani**, Deputy Prime Minister, Kurdistan Region. They discussed the current situation in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.  
Photo courtesy of KRG.

Political Affairs

**SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: “Iraq is increasingly well positioned as an arena for dialogue and investment.”**

**Baghdad, 24 February 2024** - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today the Sixth Baghdad International Dialogue. Here is the text of her speech at this event:

“Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
I’m glad to be part of this dialogue which explores opportunities to strengthen regional connectivity and integration. A timely gathering, I would say. As always, it is a great honour to be here. In Baghdad. A city steeped in history and tradition. A city I have called my home for over five years now. Ladies and gentlemen, Iraq’s centrality to regional stability cannot be overstated. For numerous reasons. This is a point I have made many times. Now, I assume there is no need to spell



out the many highs and lows which faced Iraq over the past decades. All of you will already be aware, our Iraqi friends and colleagues most of all. Instead, I wish to use this opportunity to emphasize that, today, Iraq is increasingly well positioned as an

arena for dialogue and investment. Within this context, domestic stability is (of course) key. Key for the Iraqi people, first and foremost. But also key for people of the region and beyond, as well as key for (for instance) foreign and private investors.

## SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “Iraq is increasingly well positioned as an arena for dialogue and investment.” *(continued)*

For any country to advance on the global or regional stage, it must be trusted. And, equally important, it must be able to trust others. And yes, that can be easier said than done. As we all know: trust is hard to gain but easy to lose. And nobody denies that legacies from the past can still impact the present. In other words: building trust requires constant and hard work. And that includes the ability to self-reflect.

One thing is for sure: each and every country benefits from being a reliable partner. Why? Because, at the end of the day, everything is connected.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Iraq of today is very different from that of two decades prior. It has even evolved from the Iraq I encountered in 2018 when I assumed my duties. And certainly, the Iraq of today has changed even compared to that of some 18 months ago when the country stood on the brink of total chaos; when political tensions at the time fuelled an escalation that ended in armed clashes in the heart of the capital and elsewhere.

But the Iraq of today has changed.

What I am essentially saying is that the steps taken since the Government's formation in October 2022 signal positive momentum, highlighting Iraq's enormous potential to act as a force for good – both within and outside the region.

Of course, as I said in my most recent briefing to the Security Council, for that to happen, an enabling environment will prove essential.

And such an environment requires the buy-in of each and every actor, whether in- or outside Iraq. It is quite simple: no government can go it alone. Hence, everyone is expected to support this objective, rather than to thwart it.

Now, back to today's theme. I have often underscored the importance of regional cooperation as an indispensable tool for addressing the myriad challenges facing us today. And yes, even when the geopolitical environment is fraught with

complexity, regional cooperation will serve as a crucial facilitator for stability, while unlocking potential for all.

Today, as we embark on two days of exploring regional connectivity and integration, we, sadly, must do so with the conflict raging in Gaza. And while all of us will acknowledge the fact that many actors seek to limit wider escalation, it is also clear that the security situation in the entire region remains extremely volatile.

So, in the interest of domestic and regional stability, I therefore can only repeat the appeal made by countless United Nations representatives.

That is, for all sides to exercise maximum restraint. And of course, to respect the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighbourliness.

Another point worth reiterating in times of heightened tensions or when countries are faced with national security concerns, established diplomatic instruments are at everyone's disposal – including United Nations good offices.

Ladies and gentlemen, in December 2022, speaking at the second iteration of the Baghdad Conference in Jordan, I expressed hope that such a demonstration of “regional partnership” would result in a number of concrete steps.

Steps that would solidify regional cooperation, coordination and collaboration. Steps that would even lead to a framework for regional integration as an effective means of achieving prosperity, peace and security. We have seen successful examples elsewhere in the world. And I am convinced that these opportunities are worth further exploring here.

The simple fact is that, throughout the world, regional integration is increasingly seen as indispensable. It can act as an important facilitator on the global stage, adding more weight to a single nation's voice. Moreover, most of today's challenges transcend domestic politics and state borders.

Whether we talk about climate change, water scarcity, natural disasters, energy shortfalls, pandemics, financial shocks, corruption, poverty, food insecurity, or terrorism, among others...the conclusion always is: we need each other to arrive at sustainable solutions; we need each other to be at our best.

The good news is that today's agenda encompasses critical themes which hold the key to addressing a number of collective, urgent challenges. Now, rather than painting a bleak picture of the consequences if these challenges are to be left unaddressed, I would like to emphasize instead the invaluable opportunities which could help shape the future trajectory of this region.

I will say it again: we need each other to be at our best. And I do believe that, within an environment of trust, - as we have here today - , in such an environment frank dialogue can bring about solutions. I therefore hope that all participants will, indeed, engage in an open and constructive manner, sharing their expertise and insight for the collective benefit of the region.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me end by again underlining Iraq's centrality to stability in the region. And, to quote Iraq's Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, “relations must be based on common interests”. The positioning of Iraq as an arena for investment and dialogue, rather than for clashing power bids for instance, it will, undoubtedly, benefit all.

Of course, in any relationship there has to be give and take on both sides. And this is also true within the context of solidified regional cooperation, coordination and collaboration. As a former Parliamentarian and Minister, I know all about the ebb and flow of these dynamics.

But again, I am convinced that a framework to foster regional integration as an effective means of achieving prosperity, peace and security will go a long way.

Thank you.”

## Security

### UNAMI on X

**Baghdad, 16 January 2024** - We strongly condemn last night's Iranian attack on locations in Erbil, Iraq's Kurdistan Region, which caused civilian casualties. Attacks, by any side, violating Iraqi sovereignty & territorial integrity must stop. Security concerns must be addressed through dialogue, not strikes.



## UNICEF on X

**Baghdad, 09 January 2024** - UNICEF expresses its sincere condolences and extends its sympathy to the families of the children victims of the fire that broke out in the Women's and Children's Hospital in Diwaniyah on Monday.

We are deeply saddened by the number of victims, along with the number of children affected by smoke inhalation.

In these difficult circumstances, UNICEF conveys its respect to the families and friends of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

UNICEF will continue its support to the health sector in Iraq and calls for all parties to ensure safety in health facilities, especially for most vulnerable children.



**Baghdad, 16 January 2024** – UNICEF is shocked at the killing of at least one 11-month-old child in an attack in Erbil, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

UNICEF condemns all acts of violence against children and joins the family in mourning the killing of their child and wishes speedy recovery to those injured. Being a victim of, witnessing, or fearing violence should never be part of any child's experience.

UNICEF calls on all parties to fulfill their obligation, under international law, to always protect children without delay. All children in Iraq deserve to live their lives without the constant threat of violence.

The continued usage of explosive weapons in populated areas continues to put children's lives at stake not only today, but for future generations and needs to stop.

UNICEF appeals to all parties to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth and calls for the upholding of children's right to protection and to live in an environment that is free from violence at all times.



**Baghdad, 24 January 2024** - UNICEF is deeply saddened by the killing of a 7-year-old child on Tuesday in the Garmian area of Sulaymaniyah province and presents its sincere condolences to the family.

The child was killed by a landmine while helping his father herd sheep in his community. This is yet another example of the urgent need for additional efforts to clear existing mines and unexploded ordnance and to step up Explosive Ordnance Risk Education activities in schools and communities.

Only in 2023, 18 children were killed and 34 were maimed in Iraq, most of them by explosive remnants of war; UNICEF calls all parties to uphold children's right to a safe and protective environment, including not using explosive weapons in populated areas, which causes harm to children even long after the conflict is over.

#ForEveryChild, a safe environment.



**Baghdad, 13 February 2024** - UNICEF is saddened by the accident in an amusement park that resulted in 13 children being injured in Wasit Governorate, Iraq, on 12 February 2024. UNICEF extends its wishes for a speedy recovery to the injured children. #ForEverychild in Iraq, the right to engage in play and recreational activities.



## UNAMI on X

**Baghdad, 03 February 2024** - UNAMI regrets the loss of life and injuries arising from attacks in recent days. The continuation of such strikes could have devastating consequences. The Mission again appeals for maximum restraint from all sides.



## Women Empowerment

### UNDP conducted a workshop to advance reporting capacity on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration

**Baghdad, 11 January 2024** - 28 years have passed since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action! Since then, there has been progress in women's empowerment, however challenges remain. In collaboration with the National Directorate of Iraqi Women, UNDP conducted a workshop to advance reporting capacity. Delving into the critical areas of the

Declaration, the workshop provided a space for participants to develop insight and recommendations. Ratified by Iraq among other 188 countries, the declaration provides an international pathway for Iraq's progress in achieving women's empowerment.



## DSRSG Cordone encourages Iraqis to support women's participation in politics



**Baghdad, 29 January 2024** - At the launch of a joint report on strengthening the participation and representation of Iraqi women in political and electoral processes, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, encouraged Iraqis to consider its recommendations and build on existing good practices to support women's participation in politics.

The conference was attended by Dr. Yossra Karim, Director General, National Directorate for Iraqi women, as well as Members of Parliament, newly elected female Governorate Council members, civil society, and representatives of the Independent Higher Electoral Commission (IHEC) and the Supreme Judicial Council.

The report, jointly produced by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, reflects the results of 12 consultation sessions conducted across Iraq with local authorities, civil society organizations, former parliamentarians and Governorate Council members, youth, and women, to identify challenges and ways to strengthen women's participation in politics. The recommendations of the report include providing training on political processes to women already in politics or aspiring to enter politics; encouraging media to avoid bias against the role of women in politics; adopting security measures such as the hotlines for complaints during electoral campaigns; and urging political parties to promote women in leadership positions.

"The struggle for affirming the equal rights and opportunities for men and women, including in the realm of political participation and representation, is not an easy one. We welcome Iraq's commitment to this

noble undertaking, and remain steadfast in our own commitment to support the Government and people of Iraq in the pursuit of this objective," DSRSG Cordone said in his speech.

Here is the text of his remarks:

"Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be speaking at this event on "The Vision of the Government of Iraq on the Political Role of Women", which is being held after the successful conduct of the Governorate Council elections last December.

According to the elections final results announced by the IHEC, women won 76 seats out of a total 285 seats – with 75 winning as part of the 25% minimum quota prescribed by the Constitution and the law, and one woman winning under the quota for minority seats. It is important to emphasize that the 25% quota is a minimum, and that we should continue our efforts to ensure that it is a floor and not a ceiling.

We would like to commend the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and the High Committee on Support for Women's Participation in the Governorate Council Elections for their efforts in promoting women's participation in the elections. We welcome the decision of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers to make the High Committee for Support for Women's Political Participation a permanent committee. This will enable sustained attention and the prioritization of women's political empowerment beyond elections.

In this context, I wish to draw attention to a joint report issued today by UNAMI and the National Directorate for Iraqi Women. This report reflects the results of 12 consultation sessions conducted with local authorities, civil society organizations, former parliamentarians and Governorate

Council members, youth, and women, to identify challenges and ways to strengthen women's participation in politics.

The recommendations of the report include providing training on political processes to women already in politics or aspiring to enter politics; encouraging media to avoid bias against the role of women in politics; adopting security measures such as the hotlines for complaints during electoral campaigns, as was the case in the last Parliamentary and Governorate Council elections; and urging political parties to promote women in leadership positions. Today, as we publish this report, we encourage all to consider its recommendations and build on existing good practices to support women's participation in politics.

Before concluding, I wish to refer to the debate on the word "gender" that has taken place in recent months, often fueled by misunderstandings. The main concern in this regard that we have heard from many women across Iraqi society is that this debate can stifle good activities on behalf of women's rights. Yet women's rights are protected by the Iraqi Constitution and the law. Iraq should take pride in pursuing an agenda which supports them. We see this as one of the main tasks of the National Directorate and the High Committee, and we look forward to continuing working with them.

In conclusion, as in many other societies in the world, the struggle for affirming the equal rights and opportunities for men and women, including in the realm of political participation and representation, is not an easy one. We welcome Iraq's commitment to this noble undertaking, and remain steadfast in our own commitment to support the Government and people of Iraq in the pursuit of this objective. Thank you."



## First Women's Protection Centre in Mosul offers enhanced safety and living conditions for girls and women survivors of violence



**Ninewa, 27 February 2024** – Today, UNFPA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ninewa Governorate, proudly announces the inauguration of the Women Protection Centre in Mosul, located in the Al-Akhaa area. The opening of the Centre, constructed with support from UN-Habitat and funding from the French Government, signifies a crucial step in addressing the urgent need to enhance access to protective services for girls and women survivors of violence.

UNFPA ensures that all women and girls served in the centres will receive comprehensive support, including medical, psychosocial, and legal aid, employment opportunities, and assistance in reintegrating into society. After completion, the facility was handed over to the local authorities, who are now responsible for its operation and for meeting the community's needs. From the project's inception, collaboration with the Ninewa Governorate Office, the Women's Empowerment Department in the governorate, the Municipality of Mosul, and the Electricity and Water Directorates has been crucial to the successful completion of the construction.

The Centre, covering 520 square



meters across two floors, includes vital facilities such as a lobby, security room, clinic, restrooms, kitchen, dining room, management room, workstations, and accommodation rooms. Led by UN-Habitat, the construction phase generated 1,994 daily job opportunities for around 84 skilled and unskilled local workers from Mosul, highlighting the project's substantial economic impact on the community since its inception.

Attending the ceremony, Mr Patrick Durel, France's Ambassador to Iraq, stated that: "France commends the establishment of a protection centre to host women survivors of violence. As the Ambassador of France in Iraq, I am very proud to take part to its inauguration. France is honoured to have funded this project, which also includes the establishment or renovation of facilities in Baghdad, Ramadi and Diwaniyah." "I praise UNFPA's efforts to make this centre possible in cooperation with UN-Habitat. I also commend the commitment of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to set women's protection as a priority. We must all provide girls and women with protection, in France or in Iraq, now or tomorrow. Iraq can rely on the French government to carry on with its cooperation in this regard," he added.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mrs Rafi'a Mohammed Saeed, the Director of the Department of Women, Family and Children in Ninewa Governorate, said that "the Women's Protection Centre holds great significance within Ninewa Governorate, as it addresses the crucial need for a safe haven for women facing violence. Prior to its establishment, our community lacked essential support systems for these vulnerable individuals. With the centre now open, women in need can access protection, psychological support, and additional essential services. We express our

gratitude to UNFPA, the French government, and UN Habitat for their invaluable contributions in making this vital achievement a reality."

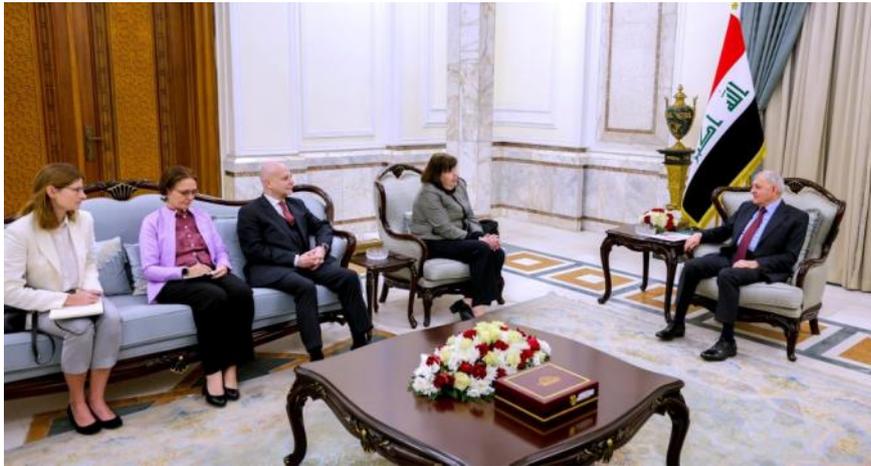
"The Women Protection Center in Ninawa is a crucial initiative providing a safe and supportive haven for survivors of violence, offering critical services and care essential for their healing journey," stated Mr. Nestor Owomuhangi, UNFPA's Representative to Iraq. He emphasised that UNFPA's dedication goes beyond inaugurating the centre, aiming for lasting and impactful change. "In addition to establishing survivor services, UNFPA is actively collaborating with the government to enhance policy frameworks preventing all forms of violence against women and girls. The centre stands as a beacon of hope and resilience, symbolising our commitment to comprehensive support and enduring positive transformation in the lives of those we serve."

"UN-Habitat is honoured with the completion and handover of the first Women Protection Center in Mosul. Every aspect of the facility, from the accommodation rooms to the access points, has been meticulously designed to enhance the protection and living conditions of women and girls who are survivors of violence. Our commitment to fostering a better urban future includes making cities safer for all individuals, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind" said Mr. Muslim Qazimi, Head of UN-Habitat's Country Programme in Iraq.

The building of the Women Protection Centre in Mosul was part of a comprehensive project, "Restoring Women, Youth, and Health Services in Iraq," that includes the establishment of new facilities in Diwaniyah and Anbar, as well as the improvement of conditions in the operating Centre in Baghdad, renovated in 2023. This encompasses not only the physical infrastructure but also the provision of necessary equipment and supplies. The Women Protection Center in Baghdad, already renovated and operational, exemplifies the project's commitment to creating secure spaces for survivors of violence.

As we inaugurate the Women Protection Center in Ninewa, Mosul, we look towards a future where survivors of violence find solace, support, and a path to rebuilding their lives. This initiative underscores the importance of creating safe spaces that not only protect but empower.

## UN Special Representative of Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict concludes official visit to Iraq



**Baghdad/New York, 12 January 2024** - The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC), Ms. Virginia Gamba, conducted her first visit to Iraq from 7 to 11 January 2024 to commend the progress made by the Iraqi Government on the protection of conflict-affected children and to engage with the Government on areas in which the United Nations may offer further support.

SRSG Gamba welcomed the signing of the action plan by the Government in March 2023 to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and significant progress achieved in its implementation. She commended the steps taken to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the PMF, including awareness-raising campaigns, measures to strengthen age assessment, and to promptly investigate any allegations of

recruitment and use of children. She also welcomed the absence of verified cases of recruitment and use of children by PMF since 2021.

“The adoption and implementation of the action plan are strong expressions of the Iraqi Government’s commitment to enhance the protection of children,” she said.

During her visit, SRSG Gamba met with the President, H.E. Mr. Abdul Latif Rashid, the Minister of Justice, H.E. Khaled Salam Saeed Shwani, the Minister of Interior, H.E. Abdul Amir Al-Shammari, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, H.E. Mr. Ahmad Al-Asadi, the Secretary-General of the PMF, Lt General Tahseen Abd Muttar, the interministerial National Committee for the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and other relevant Government representatives. She encouraged the Government to build on the significant progress made to further institutionalize child

protection by developing preventative frameworks, including by adopting of the draft child law, prioritizing demining and explosive risk education, ensuring legal documentation for all children in Iraq, including foreign children, strengthening long-term, community-based reintegration, and addressing the challenges faced by children detained for their or their families’ actual or alleged association with armed groups.

In her meeting with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, H.E. Masrour Barzani, in Erbil SRSG Gamba emphasized the importance of raising awareness on child protection issues and engaged with the Prime Minister on the implementation of measures to better protect children in the region in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

SRSG Gamba also held meetings with United Nations entities, the international community, and non-governmental organizations and welcomed their efforts to strengthen the protection of children in Iraq. Further, the SRSG’s delegation visited a detention center near Baghdad and a reintegration center for conflict-affected children near Mosul.

“I welcome the positive and constructive engagement with the Government of Iraq and its clear willingness to continue strengthening the prevention of grave violations against children. The children of Iraq have suffered enough from the consequences of armed conflict and deserve a future free from fear and violence.” said SRSG Gamba.

### Living with Disabilities

## UNICEF creates an inclusive space for open dialogue and engagement with the organizations of Persons with Disabilities

**Baghdad, 03 January 2024** - UNICEF, in collaboration with UN agencies and through a consultation workshop, created an inclusive space for open dialogue and engagement with the organizations of Persons with Disabilities to shape the United Nations roadmap from 2025-2029, and the UNICEF plan for 2025-2028. This marks an initial and vital stride for the UN Disability Inclusion Group to establish a foundational relationship with the organization of Persons with Disabilities, paving the way for future discussions under the unified platform of the one UN.



## UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes workshops on climate change and its impact on human rights



**Baghdad, 21 January 2024** – On 10 January 2024 UNAMI Human Rights Office organized two workshops in Sulaymaniyah and Halabja on climate change and its impact on human rights. The workshops were attended by 45 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.

On 21 January 2024, UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion under the theme “Human Rights and Climate Change” in Mosul. The event identified main challenges of climate change as experienced in Nineveh governorate, in addition to the need to improve climate policies as well as to provide sufficient resources and capacities to tackle the impact of

climate change. Moreover, participants proposed actions to be taken by both local authorities and civil society to address such challenges. Attendees included representatives of NGOs, government agencies, academics, and community stakeholders dealing with the subject matter.



## UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes a briefing session on human rights and UNAMI’s work thereto

**Erbil, 24 January 2024** - UNAMI Human Rights Office, in coordination with Tishk International University in Erbil, organized a briefing session on human rights and UNAMI’s work thereto. 51 Students and professors from the College of Law of Tishk International University participated in the session. Participants were briefed on UNAMI’s human rights monitoring and reporting, focusing on priority areas of work in the Kurdistan region, including civic space and the

administration of justice among other topics and discussed the relevance of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in today’s context.



## Freedom of Expression

## The Iraqi Women Journalists’ Forum (IWJF) and UNAMI’s Human Rights Office jointly organized a national conference on journalistic reporting inclusive of human rights and women’s rights

**Baghdad, 20 January 2024** – The Iraqi Women Journalists’ Forum (IWJF) and UNAMI’s Human Rights Office jointly organized a national conference on journalistic reporting inclusive of human rights and women’s rights. The conference was attended by 52 participants, including journalists, representatives of civil society organizations and the UNWomen.

At the conference, six reportages/videos produced by trainees of the IWJF-run trainings held throughout 2023 in Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and Najaf on inclusive journalism were presented and discussed. The reportages focused on lack of employment opportunities in Heet city,



pollution in the Kufa river, violence against journalists, challenges faced by women candidates during elections, situation of women detainees, and challenges faced by children with special needs. Five of these media

productions and their authors were given awards at the event.

The conference was the last event in a series of activities conducted by the IWJF, with the support from UNAMI’s Human Rights Office, under the

## The Iraqi Women Journalists' Forum (IWJF) and UNAMI's Human Rights Office jointly organized a national conference ... *(continued)*

OHCHR Global Drive for Media Freedom, Access to Information and Safety of Journalists Project with the funds from the Government of the Netherlands. In 2023, five two-day in-

person trainings, and in 2022, 18 online trainings and one Training of Trainers were held throughout Iraq, benefitting a total of 283 women journalists, bloggers, writers, and human rights

defenders on strengthening the inclusivity of their journalistic reporting by addressing challenges specifically faced by women journalists, bloggers, writers and activists.

## The first group of the UNFPA-Rudaw journalism training started its exciting journey



**Erbil, 28 January 2024** - This week, the first cohort of the UNFPA - Rudaw journalism training started its exciting

journey! The training kicked off with 23 inspiring young women and girls from

Erbil. The participants gained the skills and knowledge they need to become professional journalists. And it builds capacity of participants to report on important issues like violence against women, women empowerment, climate change and the SDGs.

Thank you to @seedkurdistan for providing two very informative sessions on the different types of violence, including technology-facilitated violence, and the ethical coverage of violence and women-related issues in the media.

These training would not be possible without the British Embassy Baghdad dedication for tackling violence against women and girls in Iraq. Stay tuned for the upcoming training that will amplify the voices of women and girls for positive social change!

## Three Iraqi radio stations have been granted funding by UNESCO to enhance voices of peace

**Baghdad, 28 January 2024** – UNESCO successfully concluded a project aimed at fostering peace through local radio stations in liberated areas, with financial support provided by the French Embassy in Iraq. Babylon Radio, Ain Kawa Radio, and Angamy Radio were among the recipients of the grants, utilizing the funds to broadcast programs, dialogues, and radio content aligned with UNESCO's standards for peace-building through media.

During a month-long radio campaign, these stations, in collaboration with Peace Radio, focused on promoting peace concepts according to UNESCO guidelines. The campaign targeted liberated areas and regions in the Kurdistan area as well. UNESCO executed this initiative with the backing of the French government, conducting training sessions for over forty local radio stations spanning western and central Iraq, as well as the Kurdistan region. The training aimed at bolstering the role of local radio stations in promoting peace concepts,



societal reconciliation, and cultural acceptance while discouraging hate speech and discrimination.

UNESCO announced that radio stations that underwent training have the opportunity to secure funding for producing radio content aligned with peace concepts. These radio programs garnered acceptance and appreciation among the targeted communities,

prompting the stations to continue broadcasting such programs even after the designated period for the financial grants has ended.

On a positive note, some radio stations, like Youth Voice Radio in Anbar, have voluntarily contributed to this project, underscoring the importance of promoting peace values and concepts in the Anbar region.

## Families bid solemn farewell to identified Yazidi victims of ISIL genocide in Sinjar

**Sinjar, 24 January 2024** - In a momentous ceremony held in Sinjar today, the Iraqi authorities organized the return of remains of 41 identified Yazidi victims, recovered from mass grave sites in Sinjar.

The First Lady of Iraq Shanaz Ibrahim Ahmed took part in the ceremony, alongside dignitaries from the Iraqi Federal Government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, Yazidi community representatives, local authorities, and Special Adviser Christian Ritscher, the Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL (UNITAD).

The remains of the Yazidi victims of ISIL were returned to their next of kin in Sinjar in a religious and official ceremony. This will allow families to bury their loved ones in accordance with their traditions. The victims were mourned by the Yazidi community, and a number of family members who journeyed from abroad, to participate in this solemn ceremony.

In his remarks, Special Adviser Ritscher extended heartfelt condolences to Yazidi survivors and families of the victims, commending the resilience of the Yazidi community, especially the courageous women, who have been adamant in their calls for justice, and have been brave in coming forward with their witness accounts of ISIL horrors.

Special Adviser Ritscher also commended the collaborative efforts of competent national authorities and the joint work that has been done with UNITAD's support to identify those victims, and ensure the return of their remains for dignified burial. He highlighted the Team's partnership with Iraqi authorities including in the

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), as well as the leadership of competent Iraqi counterparts, mainly the Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) and Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD).

The return of remains ceremony in Sinjar was preceded by an official ceremony in Baghdad on 22 January. Leading up to the return, the remains were meticulously examined and identified by MLD through advanced methods and supported by state-of-the-art equipment and technology. UNITAD has continuously supported the efforts of MGD and MLD in this regard, providing equipment and technical expertise where essentially needed.

"Supporting excavation of mass graves is a crucial pursuit for UNITAD's work, and our joint quest for accountability and justice. These operations provide the opportunity to determine the fate of thousands of victims, but as importantly, they supplement the holdings of forensic evidence on ISIL's crimes," stressed Special Adviser Ritscher.

To address the anticipated emotional and psychological toll on families and survivors, psychosocial support was

provided on-site by numerous competent national and international organizations including UNITAD's leading psychologists that operate under the Team's rigorous trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches.

While these ceremonies offer a glimpse of solace to the families, they also provide a reminder of the important task that lays ahead on the path of accountability. Towards this end, Special Adviser Ritscher underlined: "Today we stand in testing times, when the whole world must join in ensuring safe havens are closed off to all perpetrators of ISIL heinous crimes, and ensuring justice and accountability are realized as such to make it clear that impunity has no place in our world. It is our chance to show the world how Iraq can be the cradle of healing from divides and extremism through accountability processes and victim participation in proceedings that conform with international standards."

You can access Special Adviser Christian Ritscher's full remarks at <https://www.unitad.un.org/content/remarks-special-adviser-christian-ritscher-third-return-remains-ceremony-sinjar>



### Victims of Terrorism

## Shoura City reclaims its narrative with new monument unveiling

**Shoura, 28 January 2024** - The community of Shoura city came together today to celebrate the completion of a monument. A pair of clasped hands cast in bronze now sits at the entrance of the city, greeting those who enter with a symbol of community and collective healing years after being ravished by Daesh control.

The memories associated with this city's entrance are deeply traumatic for the residents of Shoura – Daesh once

carried out their crimes and executions and this location to intimidate the community into submission.

The Youth Messengers Organization (YMO), a local NGO active in southern Mosul, lead the community toward healing by constructing this monument, selecting the city's entrance to rebrand the town.

Designed by Iraqi artist Ninos Thabit, the monument measures 100cm x 340cm at the base and stands 375cm

tall and was constructed over the course of three months. It stands as a symbol of resilience and unity for the community in Shoura in the face of violent extremism.

In Cuneiform, the Sumerian form of writing in ancient Iraq, the monument is adorned with the words "The Civilization of the Great", "Shoura" and "We Will Remain Here Forever" in addition to Mesopotamian symbols.

Iraqi sculptor Ninos Thabit – pictured

## Shoura City reclaims its narrative with new monument unveiling *(continued)*



in this photo at the site – said: “The sculpture is inspired by Assyrian art, the waters represent the Tigris and Euphrates – being the source of life that surrounds Shoura. The holding hands represent unity of Iraqis. The monument represents what we want and need. Especially during these circumstances that we’re living in. I

hope that peace prevails in Iraq.”

Organized by YMO, the monument unveiling event was attended by local dignitaries and community members including the mayor Mohammed Farhan who said during the event: “These [community-led] activities, from handcrafts and painting to planting trees and the installment of this

monument contribute to the development of our area and building a shared future of reconstruction and social cohesion.”

The community members were actively involved in both the design and construction process of the monument. Supported by IOM’s Wasl Civil Society Fund, the YMO has been actively supporting volunteer activities that contribute to peacebuilding and prevention of violent extremism in southern Ninewa, including paintings on public buildings that spread positive messages. YMO’s work, including this monument, is made possible thanks to support from the German Federal Foreign Office.

Since 2020, IOM has worked in partnership with the Government of Iraq and community members to develop whole-of-society programmes and strategies to prevent violent extremism and build sustainable peace. IOM established the Wasl Civil Society Fund in the spring of 2022 and has since supported 41 civil society organizations to deliver 50 projects, catalyzing community led initiatives that address drivers of instability, displacement, and violent extremism.

## UNITAD

### UNITAD takes part in the return of remains ceremony for victims of ISIL's attack on the Badush prison

**Najaf, 28 December 2023** - On behalf of Special Adviser Christian Ritscher, Mr. Anees Ahmed, Chief of the Office of Evidence Management took part in the return of remains ceremony for victims of ISIL's attack on the Badush prison.

The ceremony which took place on December 28th in Najaf was organized by the Al-Abbas's Holy Shrine, which also constructed a new cemetery for the victims of the Badush Prison massacre, aimed at bringing some solace to the bereaved families.

These efforts culminate the extensive work carried out by national specialists from the Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) and Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD). UNITAD has provided support to Iraqi national counterparts at MGD and MLD for the exhumation and identification of victims from a number of mass grave sites related to ISIL attack targeting Badush prison on June 10, 2014. This included onsite forensic support to excavations, providing

equipment, and assisting with documentation, research, site protection, prospection, excavation, recovery, and evidence preservation.

UNITAD continues to investigate the Badush prison massacre, among other heinous crimes committed by ISIL against the Shia of Iraq, including the massacre against the Tikrit Air

Academy personnel (also known as Camp Speicher), the attacks on Shia in and around Mosul, as well as ISIL's development and deployment of chemical weapons in Iraq, including against the Shia Turkmen in the town of Taza Khurmatu. The Team also intensified investigations into ISIL's crimes against Shia Turkmen women.

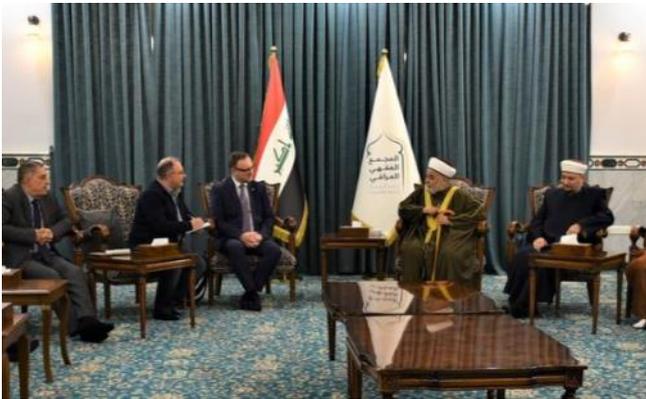




**Baghdad, 09 January 2024** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to receive **Shiekh Nayyief Jassim Qassim**, Kocho village tribal leader from Sinjar. They discussed ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Yazidi community and progress in key lines of investigations, as well as the recovery and identification of victims.



**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to welcome **H.E. Young Jae Kim**, Deputy Chief of Mission-Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Baghdad, to brief about UNITAD's work. They discussed recent developments in the Team's investigations towards the fulfilment of its mandate and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.



**Baghdad, 17 January 2024** – The Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet members of the Jurisprudence Council **Sheikh Dr. Abdul-Sattar Abdul-Jabbar** and **Sheikh Dr. Abdul-Wahab Ahmed Al Taha** at the Holy Shrine and Mosque of Imam Abu Hanifa. They discussed progress in the Team's investigations into ISIL crimes against the Sunnis in Iraq, as well as the importance of recognizing ISIL crimes for their true nature as international crimes, bringing perpetrators to justice in competent courts and evidence-based trials. They, further, exchanged views on how UNITAD's work contributes to community healing and reconciliation where accountability processes help prevent the recurrence of such crimes and resurgence of ISIL ideology.



**Baghdad, 22 January 2024** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** took part in the official ceremony held at the Martyrs Monument in Baghdad for Yazidi victims of ISIL. The identified victims' remains will be returned to Sinjar this week to be laid to rest in accordance with their religious and cultural traditions.



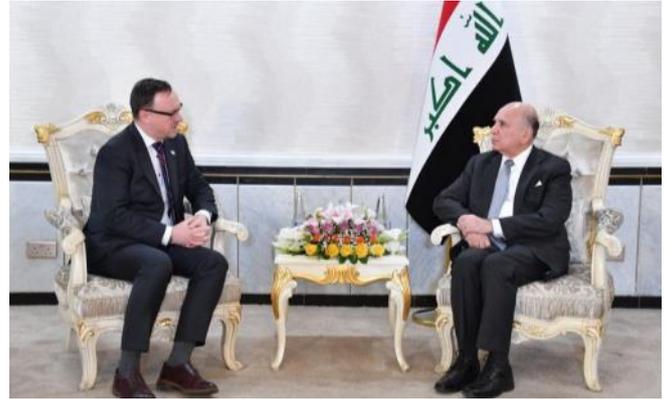
**Baghdad, 24 January 2024** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was honored to be part of the this year's Iraq Judicial Day celebration hosted by His Excellency **Chief Justice Faiq Zaidan** and the honorable Supreme Judicial Council. The Iraqi judiciary continues to be UNITAD's main partner, working towards accountability for international crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq and seeking justice for Iraqi victims and survivors.



**Baghdad, 28 January 2024** – Today, Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met with His Excellency **Chief Justice Faiq Zaidan**, the President of the Supreme Judicial Council to discuss the way forward towards implementing Security Council Resolution 2697 and ensuring proper and meaningful completion of UNITAD's mandate in Iraq.



**Baghdad, 30 January 2024** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to receive **Mr. Saeed Qasim Sulaiman**, the co-founder of Farida Global Organization at UNITAD HQ in Baghdad. They discussed ongoing cooperation with the Yazidi community towards the common goal of accountability for ISIL international crimes, including genocide against Yazidis in Sinjar.



**Baghdad, 31 January 2024** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet today with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **H.E. Fuad Hussein**. They discussed ongoing cooperation towards implementing Security Council Res. 2697, and the importance of a proper and meaningful completion of UNITAD's mandate in Iraq. Special Adviser Ritscher reaffirmed the Team's full respect to the sovereignty of Iraq and its commitment to work jointly with competent Iraqi authorities and to proceed with the provision of evidence in support of accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq and throughout the world.

## UNITAD on X

**Baghdad, 04 February 2024** - As we mark World Interfaith Harmony Week, we are reminded of the importance of dialogue and diversity.

UNITAD continues to work closely in partnership with all Iraqi communities impacted by ISIL crimes, guided by its core principle of no hierarchy in victims. The Team continuously engages religious leaders and helps foster healing through the promotion of accountability and justice.

## UNITAD hands over additional equipment to the Iraqi Mass Graves Directorate

**Baghdad, 09 February 2024** - UNITAD continues to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to supporting competent Iraqi authorities by providing equipment and technical assistance.

On behalf of UNITAD, Mr. Anees Ahmed, Director of the Office of Evidence Management, handed over additional equipment to the Iraqi Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) on Thursday. The equipment was received by Mr. Dia' Karim Tehmeh, the Director General of MGD, marking the beginning of a new phase of this continued support and partnership.

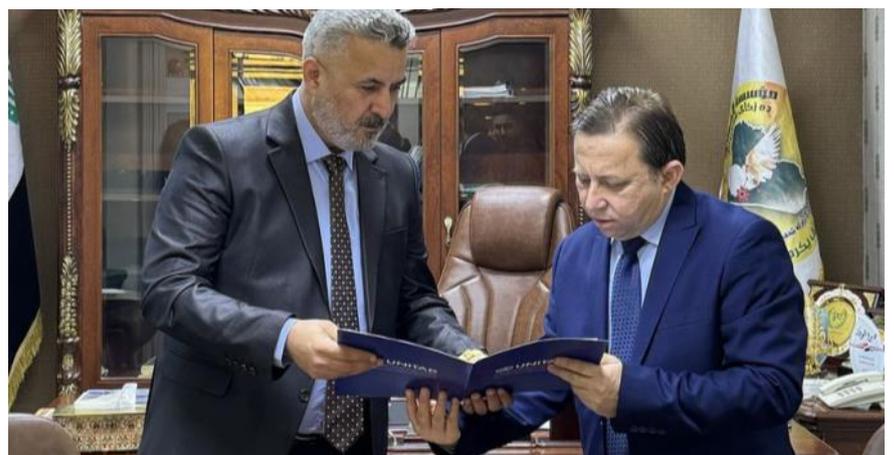
This vital equipment enhances the capabilities of national experts in conducting forensic archaeological work and scientifically recovering victims' remains and physical evidence from mass grave sites. Further equipment is anticipated to be provided to MGD experts in the coming months.

This initiative attests to UNITAD's

partnership with MGD, its leadership and its national experts who work to ensure the proper excavation and investigation of mass grave sites of victims of ISIL, paving the way to the identification of those victims, and offering some solace to the

families of victims who await to know the fate of their loved ones.

Through the provision of technical expertise and unwavering support, UNITAD continues to serve the people of Iraq and pursue justice.



## UNITAD on X

**Baghdad, 12 February 2024** - On the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism, UNITAD stands with all the victims of ISIL gruesome crimes in Iraq.

Evidence-based accountability and meaningful justice are crucial for the prevention of violent extremism and the healing of societies.

## UNITAD and al-Alamain Institute for Graduate Studies launch a lecture series on legal issues of international criminal investigations

**Baghdad, 11 February 2024** – Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Christian Ritscher, inaugurated a lecture series for post graduate students, as a part of an ongoing Program of Cooperation with al-Alamain Institute for Graduate Studies.

The first lecture of the series discussed “genocide and genocidal intent in the context of international criminal investigations”, providing a legal overview and analysis on the genocide convention, elements of genocide, and means of proof of special intent among other relevant themes.

“Today’s lecture marks a very important stride in our shared commitment to fostering accountability and advancing legal scholarship on issues relevant to the heinous crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq,” said Special Adviser Ritscher, adding: “it is



one step forward in our dedicated journey to support Iraq in its pursuit of justice. Through the Program of Cooperation with al-Alamain Institute, we have cultivated a robust exchange of expertise between UNITAD and the academic community in Iraq, empowering postgraduate students with the tools necessary to confront the complex challenges posed by international crimes and the legacy of transnational terrorism.”

The participants included UNITAD senior experts alongside Iraqi legal scholars as well as Master’s and Doctoral students from the Institute.

This lecture series is planned for the upcoming weeks and months and is hosted at al-Alamain Institute, to present and discuss various subjects of high importance to national legal experts, especially those pursuing research and studies in the field of international criminal justice and ISIL’s international crimes. This joint endeavour is a part of an ongoing partnership with the Institute, aiming to provide postgraduate students with various opportunities to engage with UNITAD’s experts, and enabling UNITAD to benefit from the profound national legal expertise of the Institute.

## UNITAD hands over a landmark case assessment report to the Iraqi Judiciary: unveiling the structure of ISIL's Bayt Al Mal

**Baghdad, 12 February 2024** - Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Mr. Christian Ritscher handed over, today to the Iraqi judiciary, a new case assessment report on the “Structure of Diwan Bayt al-Mal (2014-2017)”.

Additionally, Special Adviser Ritscher handed over the package of underlying evidence referenced in the report. The case assessment report alongside the evidence were handed over to H.E. Chief Justice Faiq Zaidan, President of the Supreme Judicial Council at the Council in Baghdad.

“This report encompasses UNITAD’s findings, thus far, on ISIL’s treasury, which is one of the most important lines of inquiry for the Team’s investigations, as it delves into the financial infrastructure ISIL put in place to sustain the organization’s military operations,” said Special Adviser Ritscher, adding that “the findings of this case assessment report demonstrate ISIL’s management of Bayt al-Mal and how the power to make financial decisions and adopt financial policies rested with the highest authorities, namely the Delegated Committee, the Shura Council and the Caliph. Understanding the connection between ISIL’s financial management, organizational structure, and hierarchy



is crucial for pinpointing those most responsible for the international crimes perpetrated by ISIL in Iraq. It is an important piece of the puzzle which is vital for drawing the full the picture of the range of heinous crimes committed by ISIL.”

This case assessment report is the outcome of years of robust investigations into ISIL financial and economic crimes, which were conducted by one of the Team’s dedicated thematic units focused on this line of investigations.

“We are extremely proud of our partnership with the Iraqi judiciary in conducting this work. The judiciary is UNITAD’s natural partner, and we commend the leading role of Iraq’s competent investigative judges who

have been supporting our work towards accountability for ISIL international crimes. I would like to thank, in particular, Judge Ali Jaffat, First Judge of Al Kharkh Investigation Court for his support to this line of investigations into ISIL financial structures, including this case assessment report.”

Over the coming months, UNITAD will hand over to the Iraqi judiciary a series of case assessment reports that encompass legal findings pertaining to specific international crimes committed by ISIL, in addition to the provision of evidence, in line with its mandate and relevant Security Council resolutions, and in accordance with the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 2697 (2023).

## UNITAD legal experts took part in a lecture on “Procedural Aspects of Criminal Law”

**Baghdad, 18 February 2024** - UNITAD legal experts took part in a lecture on “Procedural Aspects of Criminal Law” together with Iraqi legal scholars as well as Master’s and Doctoral students at al-Alamain Institute for Graduate Studies, as part of implementing the Programme of Cooperation between UNITAD and the Institute.

This joint endeavor comes in the context of an ongoing partnership with



the Institute, aiming to provide postgraduate students with various opportunities to engage with UNITAD’s

experts, and enabling UNITAD to benefit from the profound national legal expertise of the Institute.

## Digitization and preservation of ISIL related documents

**Baghdad, 18 February 2024** - Since 2020, UNITAD has been supporting Iraqi counterparts, in particular the Iraqi judiciary, with innovative, cutting-edge solutions to manage the millions of pages of documentary evidence on ISIL international crimes in Iraq. This work was made possible thanks to the European Union funded flagship Digitization Project. So far, over 14 million pages of evidence have been digitized in 20 courts across Iraq, who have been the main beneficiaries of this digitization work.

The EU supported Digitization Project has allowed courts to easily access evidence and information, supporting the process of justice and ensuring that

all pieces of evidence are preserved securely in accordance with international standards at the holdings of Iraqi courts. This project marks a significant achievement in the ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the

Iraqi judiciary, on the path of promoting accountability for international crimes committed by ISIL. UNITAD proudly presents this video that showcases the project and its achievements.



## Displacement

### Brothers of strength: overcoming challenges together

**Ninewa, 23 January 2024** - Abdulrahman and Abdulla, 11-year-old triplets along with their sister, are originally from Al-Fallujah in Anbar governorate, Iraq. During the conflict with ISIS in Iraq, they went to Syria’s Al-Hol camp. “Life there was very restricted, and we couldn’t go outside,” the two brothers say. Now, their community will not let them return.

With crucial support from UNICEF and funding from the Government of Japan, Al-Karama Reintegration Center has become a lifeline for Iraqi families returning from Syria. The center is dedicated to facilitating their reintegration process by offering comprehensive support in various areas, including mental health and psychosocial assistance, accelerated learning programmes, catch-up classes, legal documentation support, parenting programmes, and adolescent toolkit courses.

Actively participating in activities at

Al-Karama center, the brothers are assisted by the legal department in obtaining identification documents, a vital step towards formal school enrollment. They receive psychosocial support, acknowledging the hardships they have endured, and attend catch-up classes to accelerate their learning, aiming to cover two school grades in just one year. Despite their challenging past, Abdulrahman and Abdulla are grateful for the center’s supportive environment. “At home, we often feel lonely, but here, we feel good because there are many of us,” they say.

“At the center, we learn many things, and we get support for our feelings. One cool thing we do is called the ‘Tree of Life.’ It is like making a special tree for each of us to understand our past and our future. Also, we draw maps to identify scary places and suggest ways to make roads safer,” they explain.

They also offered advice to fellow children, encouraging them to study

hard for a brighter future. Abdulrahman aspires to become a teacher in the future, while Abdulla aims to work as a humanitarian worker.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF





**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** – UN Iraq had a productive meeting with Minister of Migration and Displacement, **Ms. Evan Faiq Jabro**, who briefed the UN on the recent decision of the Council of Ministers regarding the in-camp IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The UN emphasized the principles of safe, informed, dignified, and voluntary pathways and finding durable solutions for the IDPs in line with the Government's National Plan, international standards, and the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Photo courtesy of MoMD.



**Baghdad, 14 February 2024** - In our continuing engagement about the displacement file in Iraq, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Ghulam Isaczai**, together with UNDP, UNHCR, and IOM Representatives, met with Minister of Migration and Displacement, **Ms. Evan Faiq Jabro**. They discussed the recent government's decision regarding solutions for IDPs, emphasizing voluntary, informed, safe, and inclusive return through durable solutions pathways. Photo courtesy of MoMD.



**Sulaymaniyah, 22 February 2024** - In a meeting today with Sulaymaniyah Governor, Dr. Haval Abubaker, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, discussed the IDPs situation in the governorate. He underscored UN Iraq's commitment to support Iraq in achieving durable solutions for all IDPs, guaranteeing voluntary, safe, dignified and inclusive return.



**Sulaymaniyah, 22 February 2024** - During a visit to Ashti IDP Camp in Sulaymaniyah today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, interacted with Camp residents, teachers and camp management on the Council of Minister's decision to resolve the IDP file in Iraq.



**Mosul, 24 February 2024** - Today at Hasan Sham IDP Camp in East Mosul, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, engaged with camp residents and camp management, hearing their concerns firsthand. He called for joint actions from all parties to address their challenges. The United Nations in Iraq is committed to providing durable solutions.



**Mosul, 24 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**: "Met with villagers of Ashqala Saghir in Hasan Sham today who returned 5 months ago from displacement yet still living in makeshift shelters and lack access to water, schools and health facilities. UN will continue to advocate with Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government for durable solutions for all IDPs in Iraq".

## Stories of resilience and hope!



**Baghdad, 29 January 2024** - Meet Bayda, a resilient mother of five from Al-Qaem in Salahuddin Governorate, Iraq. Bayda faced challenges during her four years living in Syria before returning to Ninewa Governorate. Thanks to the Al-Karama Center, supported by UNICEF and funded by the Government of Japan, Bayda's family is receiving crucial assistance. The center's legal department is tirelessly working to obtain the necessary identification papers for Bayda's children. Additionally, her daughter Fatima is receiving psychosocial support and education at the center.

#ForEveryChild, psychosocial support.

Meet Subhi Ali and his children, Ayat and Seraj. A family of resilience and hope!



Originally from Mosul, Iraq, their journey led them to Salamia, Ninawa governorate facing financial struggles and tensions within the family.

Thanks to UNICEF-supported psychosocial programmes, funded by the Government of Japan, Subhi found support for his family's education and well-being. His daughter Ayat found joy in her parents' newfound happiness, inspiring her to pursue her dream of being a dentist.

#ForEveryChild, a childhood.

Meet Marwa, 15, a resilient dreamer! At the Al-Karama Center, supported by UNICEF and funded by the Government of Japan, which provides comprehensive support for reintegration, services include mental health assistance, remedial classes, legal documentation support, parenting programmes, and adolescent toolkit courses.

Marwa attends remedial classes to strengthen her academic foundation through the Adolescent Girls Toolkit focusing on communication and life skills, and receives valuable guidance from a social worker. Through these programmes, Marwa has transformed from a shy girl to a confident student!

#ForEveryChild, support.



## A family's fight for custody: first proof of lineage case without DNA test in Kirkuk

**Kirkuk, 18 January 2024** – Mothers everywhere go to the ends of the earth to protect their children. Such is the case of two generations of mothers: Najla and Aisha. Najla, a single mother, and her mother, Aisha, fought for years with strength and determination to secure the custody of nine-year-old Farah. Today, the family rests easy after legally proving Farah's lineage to her mother, Najla, without a DNA test — the first successful case of its kind in the Kirkuk governorate of Iraq.

"Even if we have many problems and struggles in our life, this was our biggest problem," said Aisha. Without proper documentation, Farah could not continue school nor have government services requested under her name. This is a common fate for children born around the time of Daesh control in 2014 as many marriages and births were not legally registered, with many born in recent years still being affected. The court-ordered DNA test that starts the process of documenting a child remains a large and contested obstacle for many families in Iraq. "Now that it's solved, we can sleep comfortably. Farah can go to school, and we can work on her ID."

But Najla and Aisha had an even bigger concern than this already long list of issues: with a missing father and no civil documentation, Farah could be taken away from her mother by her father's



family claiming custody. Aisha previously lost custody of her children after divorcing her ex-husband; she didn't want to lose her granddaughter too.

Najla's husband went missing in 2017, forcing the household of women and girls to be their own breadwinners. Displaced from Shirqat during the conflict with Daesh, Aisha and Najla live in the Khazeran informal settlement in Kirkuk and work tirelessly to support Farah and her young cousin. Najla runs a small sewing business while Aisha collects and sells recyclables around the city. Often this was not enough to make ends meet. Moreover, the family also struggled to afford the lawyer and legal fees for Farah's case.

"I sold my gold. We borrowed money from family," Najla said. "But all of us worked as daily workers farming, even the kids." Every winter, the two women and two small girls would harvest corn for 13,000 Iraqi Dinars (~USD 10), per day. This disrupted Farah's schooling once she was of age, missing nearly half of the first grade.

More than from financial needs, Farah's schooling was threatened by her legal case itself. Legally proving her lineage to her mother was a necessary precursor to obtaining an ID card, which would allow her to continue her studies.

"When I'm at school, we read a lot of books. My teacher said if I miss too many classes, I will not be able to pass," Farah

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

said, “But in the end, I did it. I read all the books on my own. Sometimes my mother and grandmother help me.”

“She is so clever and brings back all her exams with high marks,” Aisha said. “Even the principal said it would be a shame if she couldn’t continue her studies, because she is so bright.”

All-in-all, the family paid nearly one million Iraqi Dinars (~USD 770) in legal fees to keep Farah in school and under their care – all to no avail. “The previous lawyer was so disappointing,” Aisha said. “She took our money and then didn’t do anything.”

Najla and Aisha heard of IOM’s legal services from a neighbour who received support from the Women Legal Counseling (WLCO) centre in Kirkuk. After calling the centre, IOM’s WLCO lawyer, Mral, made a house visit.

“We were so happy with Mral,” said Najla. “She is very good and honest, which made us very comfortable to speak to her. Every time we would go to the court, she took the time to explain everything, so we trusted her.”

Mral worked on Farah’s case for nearly a year. The main obstacles were the DNA test and getting Najla’s mother-in-law and her family to participate. “I had to speak with [the mother-in-law] very nicely and make her comfortable to convince her to keep coming to the court as needed,” Mral said.

In such cases, the Iraqi legal system typically requires a DNA test to prove a child’s lineage to the parents. The only testing facility is in Baghdad, which is a long and expensive trip that’s nearly

impossible for single women to make. Moreover, with a missing parent, four adjacent family members are required to take the test. This is something Najla’s mother-in-law simply refused to do.

“There are many, many cases like this around the villages in this area,” Mral said. “Even if we want to help them, we can’t because this is the law. We need to find another solution [to DNA testing].”

Alternatively, if the judge agrees, two of the father’s family members could act as witnesses to the marriage of the parents and birth of the child. Because of IOM’s longstanding relationship with the court system in Kirkuk, a particularly sympathetic judge allowed to proceed with the trial through witnesses. “The judge trusts IOM lawyers because we don’t take money from our clients and because they know that we review cases thoroughly before taking them on,” Mral said.

After numerous house calls and emotional appeals, Mral managed to convince the mother-in-law and another family member to act as witnesses. And with that, the judge approved Farah’s proof of lineage.

“When I first heard the news, I started crying right there in the courtroom,” said Najla. “I told my mom: ‘We did it!’ Then we returned to our neighbourhood and celebrated.” Even with what little they had, Najla and Aisha shared sweets with all their neighbours to rejoice in the good news. “Then we went directly to the school and gave them the paperwork to not remove my daughter from class.”

“I was sad when I heard I couldn’t continue school,” Farah said. Her mother

shared how she came home crying the day her principal dismissed her. But with her civil documentation in hand, Farah is excited to return to school alongside all her friends. “I want to be a doctor when I grow up,” she said.

The love Najla and Aisha have for Farah is palpable, made evermore apparent through their unfettering commitment to secure her future under their care. Their years of struggle did not go in vain, and they are eternally grateful for Mral speeding up and easing the process in the end.

Thanks to the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) for their support and enabling IOM lawyers like Mral to give the quality services the people of Iraq deserve.

IOM’s legal programme supports target communities with legal services, government engagement and capacity strengthening for local organizations and authorities to increase access to identity and civil documentation, compensation and reparation schemes. In the context of displacement, access to documentation and the protection of housing, land and property rights are fundamental to the achievement of durable solutions for populations affected by displacement. IOM reached over 13,000 individuals with legal services by the end of 2023 across Iraq and aims to resolve 14,000 urgent cases in the next year.

\*Some names were changed to protect identities

By Megan Giovannetti, IOM

## The inspiring journey of a strong female community leader



**Ninewa, 18 January 2024** - Nadia is a 48-year-old mother whose family has been displaced due to armed conflicts in Iraq. She now lives in a rehabilitation center where they are being prepared to get reintegrated into the community. “My children and I were afraid that we would never be able to return to our hometown,” Nadia says. “I was completely hopeless, depressed, and scared. I thought everyone wanted us to stay away, especially when we were not allowed to return at the beginning.”

Nadia was informed by the Iraqi Government in 2021 that she and her children could come back and stay in a rehabilitation center. This was a glimmer of hope for Nadia, who decided to start over and make positive contributions to her community. Upon arriving at the rehabilitation center, Nadia was determined to make the most of this opportunity. She quickly became involved in the center’s activities and soon caught the eye of the staff with her leadership qualities.

Recognizing her potential, the head of the center then appointed Nadia as the head of the Parents and Teachers Committee.

Additionally, she voluntarily provides awareness sessions on various topics such as nutrition and education and represents her block in the committees established in the rehabilitation center. She is a strong voice for both males and females in her community.

Nadia sees this as a new beginning: “When we came back, we felt we started over and started thinking about our children and their future”.

With support from Japan, UNICEF organized a Water Scarcity and Child Rights Awareness Campaign in collaboration with Ninewa’s Directorate of Education which Nadia strongly supported.

As an empowered community member, Nadia contributed to delivering a campaign supported by UNICEF and implemented by Ninewa’s Directorate

### The inspiring journey of a strong female community leader *(continued)*

of Education. She helped the mobilizers reach out to parents and children with messages on child rights and water scarcity in the rehabilitation center. Campaign activities included awareness-raising sessions for children and parents, focus group discussions, and a drawing competition for students.

The campaign emphasized reducing water usage, fixing leaks, and adopting sustainable practices to protect and preserve water sources. The community was made aware that every drop counts and that their actions can have a significant impact on the availability of water for themselves and their

community members. In addition, the main messages about child rights included the fact that every child has the right to a safe and nurturing environment, the importance of education for every child, listening to and valuing the voices of children, as well as promoting the idea of equality and non-discrimination.

As a mother, Nadia actively supported the campaign; her daughters participated in the drawing competition, drawing flowers and trees as symbols for climate change action.

“The mobilizers were approaching the students with lots of care and respect, and they made sure to reach out to the

out-of-school children,” she says.

As a community member, Nadia welcomed this initiative, seeing it as a way to stay connected with people. “I was happy to see this intervention because it was effective, and the team members were very dedicated. People received information on water consumption and child rights. Also, during the campaign, the team listened to our challenges and issues; they felt our needs here,” she adds.

With funding from the Government of Japan, UNICEF reached out to over 1,000 people in a one-week campaign focused on Water Scarcity and Child Rights in Ninewa.

### Another milestone towards refugee inclusion!

**Erbil, 26 February 2024** - Today, the Kurdistan’s Minister of Education, the Governor of Erbil, and UNHCR Iraq laid the foundation stone for the construction of three 12-classroom schools in Kasnazan, Shawes, and Mamzawa in Kasnazan sub-district in Erbil.

This will benefit both Iraqi and refugee children. How?

- More space for both refugee and local students.
- Access to quality and inclusive education for all.
- Improved social cohesion.

“I commend UNHCR’s strong collaboration and commitment to support the KRG’s successful strategies developed for refugee inclusion in the national education system in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.” said H.E. Dr Alan Hama Saeed, the KRG’s Minister of



Education. The construction of these schools - and many other projects - is part of our commitment to support the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Ministry of Education

on the implementation of its Refugee Education Integration Policy benefitting Kurdish and refugee children, as well as qualified refugee teachers.



**Anbar, 27 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, and IOM Iraq, met Anbar Governor, Mr. Mohammed Noori, today and congratulated him on his new position. Discussion focused on enhancing coordination and support for sustainable development and durable solutions for returnees from Al-Hol Camp and IDPs residing in Anbar. The UNIraq is committed to supporting Anbar's efforts towards reconstruction, reconciliation, and reintegration.



**Anbar, 27 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, joined by IOM Iraq, visited Anbar today and engaged with group of returnees from Al-Hol Camp in NE Syria. He reiterated UNIraq’s commitment and support to Iraq's efforts in finding durable solutions for all returnees.

## DSRSG/RC/HC visits Bzebiz informal IDP site

**Anbar, 27 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG)/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, and IOM Iraq, met with IDPs at Bzebiz informal IDP site in Anbar and listened to their concerns and challenges. The DSRSG/RC/HC underlined the need to address these issues, to ensure inclusive durable solutions for all IDPs in Iraq.



## Humanitarian

## The Netherlands allocates €48 million to support forcibly displaced people and host communities in Iraq through the PROSPECTS Partnership

*The Partnership aims to enhance durable solutions in Iraq by bringing together UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, IFC and the World Bank*

**Baghdad, 9 January 2024** – The Ambassador of the Netherlands in Iraq, Hans Sandee, and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, launched today the new phase of the Netherlands-funded PROSPECTS programme in Iraq, accompanied by the country leads of the organizations involved in the partnerships. The programme focuses on services for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and their host-communities in Iraq and builds on experience since 2019, in coordination with local and national authorities.

PROSPECTS is a flagship programme and example of the Netherlands' significant support to operationalize the humanitarian-development nexus in eight different countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, and the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region. PROSPECTS

brings together five organizations working to enhance durable solutions in Iraq: UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, IFC and the World Bank. A budget of EUR 48 million has been made available for programming in education and skills training, employment, protection, and critical infrastructure for refugees, IDPs due to conflict and host communities in Central and North Iraq over the next four years.

Among other targets, over 155,000 people displaced by conflict and members of host communities will complete their primary or secondary education (formal and non-formal) thanks to the Partnership, and over 250,000 will be retained in primary and secondary education programmes, including acceleration education programmes and early childhood education. Furthermore, the partnership will enhance access to market relevant skills training for around 5,000 young people to support smooth transition to employment. In terms of economic inclusion, over €5.2 million will be invested in target areas to promote private sector development, creating economic opportunities,

enhancing access to finance to entrepreneurs and cooperatives, and promising sectors. Furthermore, using labour intensive approaches, the partnership will support the creation of over 12,000 workdays for people displaced by conflict and host communities with a focus on the green economy.

In order to enhance their protection, 40,000 refugees and asylum seekers will benefit from national civil status, identity or legal status documentation, and 50,000 will benefit from national specialized protective services, case management services and mental health and psychosocial support. Finally, in terms of infrastructure, 80,000 people displaced by conflict and host communities will be able to access basic water services that are safe and available when needed.

"Over the next five years, the Netherlands will continue to support refugees and IDPs in Iraq to deal with the many challenges they face in their lives. We will support them in accessing jobs, education, training, and support in assuring civil documentation. Furthermore, we will extend the PROSPECTS programme by including activities on water infrastructure and housing. By combining the delivery of services to support policy reforms, we aim for displaced and host communities to lead more prosperous lives", said Hans Sandee, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Iraq.

Representing the United Nations family in Iraq, Mr Isaczai stated, "the continued support of the Netherlands for Iraq is highly appreciated, and its integrated approach enhances the provision for durable solutions for the



## The Netherlands allocates €48 million to support forcibly displaced people and host communities in Iraq... *(continued)*

internally displaced people and their host communities. The second phase of the PROSPECTS programme will enhance our collective efforts to find Durable Solutions for the conflict-affected IDPs in Iraq, in line with the Secretary-General's global call to end internal displacement globally.

Thanks to the PROSPECTS programme, in its first four years, nearly 4,000 children from forcibly displaced communities have been enrolled in secondary education, more than 130 refugee entrepreneurs have accessed micro-finance loans for the first time in Iraq, and over 45,000 IDPs

have obtained their civil documents. International programmes and support to improve socio-economic conditions for the 1.1 million IDPs, 300,000 refugees and 8,000 stateless persons in Iraq remains important and a priority for the Dutch government and the United Nations.

## UN-Habitat and the Government of Japan are collaborating to develop the residential area designated for returnees under Mosul's Master Plan

**Mosul, 31 January 2024** - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes renewed collaboration with the Government of Japan to develop peacebuilding activities and durable solutions in Northern Iraq, with a focus on assisting returnees from Mosul, one of the most conflict-affected areas.

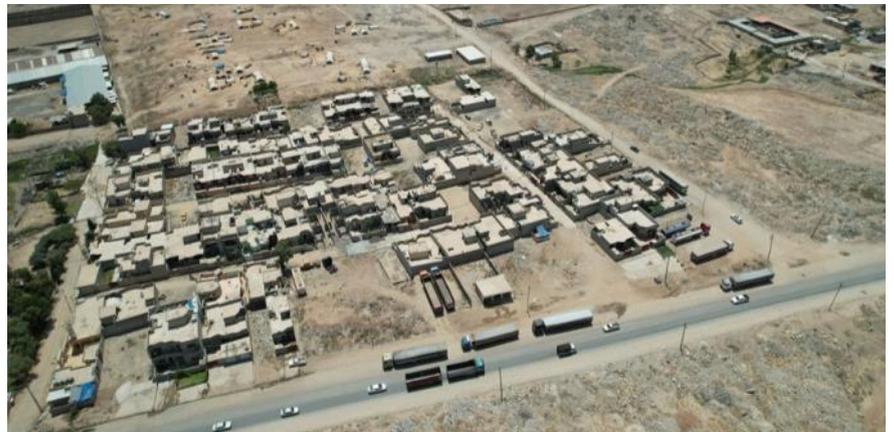
The new project is planned for development in Mosul, specifically within the residential zone designated for returnees as outlined in the city's Master Plan. Among the anticipated outcomes, there will be an emphasis on the construction of social housing units, incorporating basic public infrastructure. Additionally, to enhance socio-economic stabilisation, vocational training and a public outreach campaign on climate change adaptation will be extended to beneficiaries, especially those made most vulnerable in the aftermath of the conflict, such as women and children.

All activities are scheduled for completion by January 2025 and will be coordinated with the authorities of Mosul and Ninewa Governorate.

The upcoming endeavour will be based on the lessons learnt from the Bab Sinjar Housing Complex in Mosul, inaugurated in February 2023. It benefited 2,300 returnees, offering nine buildings with 324 units, all constructed by UN-Habitat and funded by the Government of Japan. The housing complex has been regarded as one of the best practices of durable solutions for returnees by the Government of Iraq and other humanitarian actors.

"This new project exemplifies the Government of Japan's longstanding commitment to durable solutions, facilitating returnees in rebuilding and smoothly reintegrating into their communities," His Excellency Mr. Futoshi Matsumoto, the Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, emphasized.

With recurring contributions since the Japanese Fiscal Year of 2004, the Government of Japan has been a vital partner to UN-Habitat's Iraq Programme.



### Stabilization and Development

## Completion of Al-Baguze water complex and pipeline enables access to clean water to over 1000 residents in Al-Rummana city

**Anbar, 07 January 2024** - UNDP is thrilled to announce the completion of the Rehabilitation Project for Al-Baguze Water Complex (200 m<sup>3</sup>/hr) and Pipeline, enabling access to clean water to over 1000 residents in Al-Rummana city and Al Baguze Village in Anbar, Iraq! The inauguration of this water complex, made possible through USAID Iraq's support, marks a significant achievement and paves the way towards improving water quality and access to clean water for the local community in Anbar.

In the past, this small complex consisted of only one pump which relied on water supply from the Euphrates River to residents. The Al-Baguze Water Complex lacked vital filtration and purification systems, which was exacerbated when the facility suffered from damages during the ISIL conflict, making comprehensive rehabilitation an essential need to provide citizens with clean water.

This revamped water source and rehabilitated complex supported by USAID are not just about addressing

immediate needs, but an investment in the community's future well-being and long-term satisfaction.



## UNDP successfully finalized the "Operation and Maintenance of Secondary Stations" training program in the electricity sector

**Baghdad, 13 January 2024** -

Dedicated to strengthening government employees' capacity building for enhanced service delivery and public sector improvement, UNDP successfully finalized the "Operation and Maintenance of Secondary Stations" training program in the electricity sector. The focus is on developing substations and improving services through capacity building and skill development.

Access the video at <https://rb.gy/1mp9x9>



## IOM Iraq and Germany recommit to economic recovery; creating 1,100+ new jobs

**Baghdad, 23 January 2024** —

Committed to boosting economic recovery and sustainable job creation, IOM and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, through the KfW Development Bank, launched the sixth phase of their ongoing partnership, aiming to create 1,100 new jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq, via its Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) component.

An innovative program that supports livelihoods and job creation in SMEs through private sector revitalization and economic development in Iraq, the Fund provides financial capital to SMEs in primary, secondary, and tertiary economic sectors with a high demand for labor, with special focus on fostering innovation, supporting women, and promoting green industries. A long-standing partner to and advocate of the Fund, KfW has worked hand in hand with IOM Iraq since 2018 and has supported the creation of over 6,045 jobs in Iraq, funding nearly 1,220 independent

businesses.

“A driving force behind Germany’s commitment in Iraq is to foster economic growth, create employment and contribute to social peace and stability,” shares Christiane Hohmann, German Ambassador in Iraq. “Germany supports the Fund to enable Iraqi businesses to build a brighter and sustainable future, while strengthening the resilience of internally displaced persons and empowering women and minorities to become part of the work force”.

Since 2018, the Fund has witnessed a steady upward trajectory in overall growth in the number of businesses funded, new jobs created, and existing jobs improved. Investment in SMEs has seen a trickledown effect, with businesses generating new jobs and livelihoods for other members of their community, hosting knowledge exchange and transfer and providing mentorship and guidance to new businesses. The sixth phase of the project will focus on supporting vulnerable populations such as

internally displaced persons, returnees, members of host communities, and other conflict-affected populations.

“IOM’s continued partnership with KfW and the German government is a testament to our shared vision of a prosperous Iraq with a flourishing economy,” says Giorgi Gigauri, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission. “IOM is grateful for the generous contribution that will support ongoing efforts to revitalize the economy, address various socioeconomic challenges and advance national development objectives.”

In the coming months, IOM will continue to promote women’s economic empowerment, support internally displaced persons, returnees, and host communities, while improving employability through provision of business support packages and vocational training.

“In close cooperation with relevant Iraqi authorities, we will continue our support to SMEs, with a special focus on women entrepreneurs, creating new job opportunities, assisting individuals in securing their livelihoods and providing employment opportunities for public works,” adds Dr. Anna-Christine Janke, Director of KfW Iraq.

Nine governorates across Iraq will benefit from project activities: Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninawa, Salah Al Din, and Sulaymaniyah. Additionally, the funding will allow for continued rapid cash injections directly into communities in need, via short-term employment for public works programs, which also support reconstruction efforts in affected communities. Finally, IOM will rehabilitate key community economic infrastructure to enhance business consolidation and growth.



## UNDP Statement on Iraq

**New York, 23 January 2024** - Attributable to 'a UNDP Spokesperson': "In response to a recent Guardian UK article regarding the UNDP Iraq Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) would like to state the following:

We take any allegations very seriously and are urgently looking into them. We will take appropriate and firm action should any of these allegations be substantiated.

UNDP has zero tolerance for fraud and corruption, and this applies to all UNDP staff members, non-staff personnel, vendors, implementing partners and responsible parties.

But zero tolerance does not mean zero risk. UNDP has been transparent with our donors, partners and the public about the operational risks and challenges following years of conflict in Iraq.

Any allegation of bribery, corruption, or fraud is thoroughly assessed and, where appropriate, investigated by UNDP's independent Office of Audit and Investigation (OAI).

In cases where an OAI investigation substantiates evidence supporting allegations of misconduct, UNDP has a rigorous disciplinary process that enables it to take appropriate actions against perpetrators of fraud and corruption.

In the case of FFS, given the complexity and scale of the programme, and in line with best practices, UNDP implemented a series of additional

monitoring measures beyond the standard protocols which include among others:

- In 2015, a specialized Operations Service Center was established for the FFS to manage complex procurement and operational cases, including providing due diligence and oversight.

- Since 2015, a dedicated M&E team has monitored impact and results of the FFS, undertaken physical verification of projects on the ground, and provided support to third-party monitoring missions, among other tasks.

- A dedicated OAI investigator is in place, attached to this project who thoroughly investigates all FFS allegations.

- Project audits have taken place every year for the period 2019-2022, covering more than US\$1bn of expenditure on the FFS.

- OAI has also audited the operations of the Country Office as a whole in 2023.

All OAI's audits are publicly available on their website.

We are determined to take action on cases of wrongdoing. Over the last 8 years, OAI has processed more than 130 cases related to the FFS, brought to the attention of OAI by our own staff members and third parties, with prompt action taken by UNDP management in response.

UNDP welcomes scrutiny of our projects and programmes – as a public institution we are and should be held to

account by our partners, by the public, and by the media.

In our work in Iraq and with the FFS, we have in place a rigorous set of measures to manage the risks inherent in working in such a challenging environment. We continue to strengthen these measures in close collaboration with our Independent Evaluation and Audit Offices.

We stand by our strong commitment to support the lives of millions of people in Iraq whilst maintaining the trust of everyone with whom we work.

What the FFS has achieved:

In 2015, at the request of the Government of Iraq and with the support of the international donor community, UNDP Iraq established the FFS to carry out a fast-tracked and accelerated program of reconstruction activities that have benefitted millions of Iraqi citizens to date.

The programme has enabled the return of almost five million out of six million Internally Displaced Persons, who might otherwise have remained stranded in IDP camps for years. Through the completion of more than 3,600 projects, Iraqi communities that host around 8.3 million people, now have access to restored basic services including schools, hospitals, water and electricity networks, housing and roads."

More information on reporting wrongdoing can be found at: <https://www.undp.org/accountability/audit-and-investigations>

## UN-Habitat remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq in implementing the legal decree to formalize the Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights

**Erbil, 24 January 2024** - The Executive Committee curated to work on the implementation of the legal decree issued by the Council of Ministers to formalize the Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights of all Iraqis met for the first time at a high-level workshop in Erbil.

This Executive Committee, comprised of relevant institutions from the Government of Iraq, will work closely with the Prime Minister's Office to initiate, accelerate, and manage the formalization of ownership rights and the issuance of ownership title deeds (tapoos).

Formalized HLP rights significantly limit the risk of future displacement, illegal or secondary occupation,



confiscation of property, and forced evictions for minorities, which increases the likelihood of lasting sustainable returns. UN-Habitat

remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq in implementing the legal decree and establishing security of tenure for all.

## OCHA Head of Iraq Office visits Najaf

**Najaf, 24 January 2024** - During a two-day field visit OCHA Head of Office, Monique Maani, met with the Directors of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement directorates in Diwaniya, Najaf and Karbala Governorates. The OCHA delegation received a brief on the directorates' activities and services. Discussions focused on the impact of climate change in the southern Governorates which is leading to displacement from rural areas, highlighting the importance of finding appropriate solutions to reduce displacement and alleviate the suffering of the displaced.



## Malaysian partners in a courtesy visit at UNDP's Baghdad offices

**Baghdad, 01 February 2024** – UNDP was honored to welcome its esteemed Malaysian partners for a significant courtesy visit at UNDP's Baghdad offices, an important step in exploring joint development opportunities in Iraq. The discussions focused on sustainable development in the country.



## DSSG/RC/HC for Iraq and the UN Country Team Iraq attended National Development Plan Consultation Workshop

**Baghdad, 04 February 2024** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, and the UN Country Team Iraq attended National Development Plan Consultation Workshop at the Ministry of Planning and underscored the importance of enhancing UN engagement in the process towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acceleration. DSSG/RC/HC Isaczai highlighted UNIraq commitment to align the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

(UNSDCF) strategic priorities with those of the Government of Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Iraq Ministry of Planning.



## UNDP engages directly with over 700 families in the marshlands of southern Iraq

**Basra, 04 February 2024** - UNDP engaged directly with over 700 families in the marshlands of southern Iraq, to address climate change and the ongoing water crisis in the region. Our team of young female volunteers conducted face-to-face conversations with the communities, offering insights and practical support. Each family

received solar-powered tools, a gesture aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness and potential of solar energy in the betterment of their daily lives.

This impactful initiative has been made possible through the generous support of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).



## UNDP's concludes seven-day training and practice program on commercial mediation and negotiation

Baghdad, 05 February 2024 -

UNDP's seven-day training and practice program on Commercial Mediation & Negotiation has concluded, with new knowledge and skills in the backpack. Students from various Iraqi universities have enriched their capacities to navigate complex cross-border disagreements.

Organized under UNDP's Commercial Dispute Resolution Portfolio, financed by the European Union, and hosted by the American University of Iraq - Baghdad, the program culminated in a Mediation & Negotiation competition, where teams from Al-Iraqia University and AUIB ranked the highest.

Now, the journey continues! The next destination is Vienna, where our top-ranking students have applied to compete in the prestigious Consensual Dispute Resolution Competition. An opportunity to put their newfound skills to the test on an international stage!

Reflections from Mariam Khalid, an AUIB student:



"I learned that we could solve a commercial dispute without going to court. Mediation enables parties to resolve their disputes in a mutually acceptable way. The knowledge I gained from this training will not only support me in my career but also help me resolve disputes I might face in my everyday life."

Following special awards were granted to:

1. Diyala University: Excellent teamwork between students and faculty
2. Al-Mustansiriyah University: Excellent use of the mediator
3. AUIB: Excellent teamwork between client and counsel
4. Al-Turath University: Excellent collaboration with the other team
5. Al-Iraqia University: Excellent negotiation communication skills

## Finish diplomats tour projects implemented by the UNDP in Ninawa Governorate, generously funded by Finland

Ninewa, 06 February 2024 – UNDP was honored to accompany H.E. the Ambassador of Finland in Iraq, Mrs. Anu Saarela, on a tour of projects implemented by the United Nations Development Program in Ninawa Governorate, generously funded by Finland. These projects are part of our ongoing efforts to restore the infrastructure of liberated governorates, contributing to our broader mission of achieving sustainable development goals and fostering prosperity in the region.

During the visit, we also had the privilege of meeting with the Governor of Ninawa to discuss crucial matters about the restoration of stability and development in the governorate.

H.E. the Ambassador expressed her delight at the opportunity to witness these projects firsthand, emphasizing their significance. She said, "I am truly glad to see the progress of reconstruction of Mosul and the fact that Finland has been able to contribute to this important effort. My thanks also go to UNDP for the successful completion of the projects Finland has funded. The tour has demonstrated the impressive commitment of Moslawis to rebuild their city. We could sense the optimism



and spirit of going forward."

The itinerary also included a visit to Mosul University and a meeting with University Chancellor Dr. Qusay Al-Ahmadi to discuss the latest developments in educational enhancement efforts in the region.

"Today UNDP is on a mission with the Finnish Ambassador and her team to visit the projects generously supported by the people of Finland. UNDP is very grateful for the funds that supported the restoration of Al Sukkar bridge that makes traveling to east Mosul and the University of Mosul much easier. Equally important is Finland's support

to the reconstruction of the vetting center, safeguarding the safety and security in local communities," said Auke Lootsma, UNDP Resident Representative.

This visit is part of a series of initiatives under the Stabilization Program for Liberated Areas led by the United Nations Development Program in Iraq. It underscores the importance of robust partnerships, which enable us to deliver essential services across various sectors, ensuring the safe return of IDPs and providing opportunities for sustainable development.

## UN-Habitat concludes the "Urban Geoportal for the City of Basra" workshop

**Basra, 8 February 2024** - UN-Habitat recently concluded the "Urban Geoportal for the City of Basra" workshop, aimed at technically equipping the teams from Basra's Governorate and Municipality to enhance governance capabilities for identifying and addressing critical urban issues using data-driven and participatory methodologies.

The Urban Geoportal is a platform that aggregates and manages spatial data within a collaborative database, enabling various technical groups to collaboratively analyse data, reach a consensus on critical insights, and offer evidence-based advice for strategic or operational planning.

Within five days, representatives from different directorates, including water, sewerage, urban planning, health, electricity, planning, and environment, and the municipality, received training on the Geoportal's features and its operation.



Basra's local authorities have acquired all the necessary skills and are ready to adopt and administer the GeoPortal effectively. The data collection efforts are set to commence immediately, and preparations for the official launch of the portal are underway.

The training is one component of the European Union-funded project titled

"Increasing access to job opportunities for residents of vulnerable urban areas in the city of Basra in response to the COVID-19 Crisis."

With access to high-quality and comprehensive information, decision-makers will be better equipped to identify needed services and prioritise actions within local communities.

## ILO and KfW join forces to empower Iraqi small and medium enterprises and foster inclusive growth

**Baghdad, 13 February 2024** - The ILO and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development through the German Development Bank (KfW) have launched a transformative partnership aimed at empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq.

The new "Promotion of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq program" is a collaborative endeavor that strives to unlock access to sustainable finance, placing a special emphasis on supporting youth and women entrepreneurs. The initiative contributes to fostering decent work opportunities and nurturing a prosperous future for the Iraqi economy.

Despite Iraq's abundant oil resources, the predominant role of the public sector, which contributes only about 30 per cent to national GDP, presents challenges to economic diversification. The nation grapples with high unemployment rates and a complex business environment. According to the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 report, Iraq ranked 172nd out of 190 countries for ease of doing business, with major challenges such as contract negotiation, cross-border trade, and particularly accessing credit (where Iraq ranks 186th out of 190 countries).



A significant impediment lies in the limited access of many Iraqis to finance, with less than 7 per cent of GDP allocated to private sector credit. The Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees (ICBG) plays a pivotal role in mitigating credit risks but faces obstacles in expanding access to finance for smaller businesses.

The new five-year initiative, spanning from January 2024 to December 2028, secures USD 21,5 million in funding from the German Government through KfW to markedly enhance access to finance for Iraqi SMEs, which comes in line with the priorities of the government program to support the private sector in order to create decent job opportunities, especially for youth and women. It will also work to build

the capabilities of the partners in this program, including the Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees and partner banks, as well as small and medium-sized companies that will benefit from this program.

This program signifies a crucial step towards building a more inclusive and sustainable Iraqi economy. By amplifying the voices and capabilities of SMEs, we not only create jobs but also drive innovation and propel economic growth. Partnering with KfW on this initiative will help ILO to further support private sector to take its role for creating decent and sustainable job opportunities for youth and women. is a privilege for the ILO", said Maha Katta, ILO country coordinator in Iraq.

## ILO and KfW join forces to empower Iraqi... (continued)

"Small and medium enterprises are at the core of a country's successful economic development- not only in Iraq but also in Germany. They create employment opportunities, foster growth, and contribute to economic perspectives. Together with ILO and the Iraqi Company for Credit Guarantees we address one of the biggest obstacles for SMEs in Iraq: access to adequate financial services," said Maximilian Rasch, Chargé d'Affaires at the German Embassy in Baghdad.

"Private sector development and particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a key role in economic growth. Yet, the limited availability of finance to SMEs in Iraq has been identified as one of the most severe obstacles for SMEs' business to thrive. We are therefore extremely pleased to cooperate with ILO and the Iraqi Company for Credit Guarantees in providing credit guarantees to Iraqi banks so that they can expand their SME business with a special focus on supporting women and start-ups, said Anna-Christine Janke, the Director of the KfW Office in Iraq.

From his side, Mr. Adel Akab, the President of the Iraqi Industries Union, stated, "This program is ambitious for

the union, especially since it comes from the International Labour Organization and an industrial state like Germany. With the concerted efforts of all, it will play a significant role in developing these small and medium projects in Iraq."

"The Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees is the sole assurance institution in Iraq. However, the shortfall in financing remains a challenge for most small and medium-sized projects, leaving ample room for credit guarantee facilities in Iraq to play a significant role in addressing this challenge. We are pleased with this partnership, which will enable the company to fulfill its true role in developing small and medium projects," said Mr. Hussein Thamer, the Acting Director of the Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees.

"This new joint program aims not only at enhancing access to finance for SMEs, in particular those involving youth and women entrepreneurs, but also serves as a testament to the role of collaboration across various stakeholders, including the UN, the government, local communities and international partners, in Iraq. It further underscores our commitment to creating inclusive opportunities and

building a resilient, diversified, and sustainable economy that benefits every Iraqi", said Ghulam Isaczai, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iraq.

Representatives from the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Trade, Iraqi Private Banks League, and various representatives from different partnering entities concerned with the development of the private sector attended the launch ceremony.

The "Promotion of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq" program envisions transforming the Iraqi SME credit system to foster decent work opportunities and sustainable economic development. With a target audience of 1,500 existing SMEs, and startups, the program aims to benefit 1,000 SMEs through credit guarantees. Key program activities include establishing dedicated SME windows within select private financial institutions, implementing an effective credit guarantee scheme through ICBG, providing tailored technical assistance to financial institutions, ICBG, and SMEs, and delivering targeted business management and financial literacy training programs.

## UN in Iraq launches the Diyala Joint Coordination Forum

**Diyala, 13 February 2024** - Yesterday in Diyala, led by the Governor of Diyala and in partnership with the UN in Iraq, we launched the Diyala Joint Coordination Forum. This pivotal initiative enhances coordination and collaboration in the governorate, streamlining efforts to prevent duplications and overlapping, and strengthen partnerships among local authorities, UN agencies, and NGOs. Together, we are committed to tackling challenges, supporting development and achieving durable solutions for displacement in Diyala governorate.



## UNDP provided the Anbar Governorate with fourteen dump trucks

**Anbar, 15 February 2024** - Exciting news from UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization!

UNDP provided the Anbar Governorate with Fourteen dump trucks. These trucks helped facilitate transportation of heavy materials for construction projects, and led to easier distribution of materials to serve Municipality sectors. With USAID Iraq's support,

UNDP is advancing Anbar's development and improving the urgently-needed sectors of water, electricity, and sewage.

This initiative aligns with Sustainable Development Goals SDGs: SDG6 for water and sanitation, and SDG11 for inclusive, resilient cities.

Let's build a sustainable future together!



## Celebrating Iraq's finest food: the "By Iraqi Hands" label

**Baghdad, 14 February 2024** – (ITC News) The heart of Iraq's dynamic food industry is beating fast as the country's finest food products, witness to centuries of history and tradition, will soon be in the spotlight at the Iraq National Trade Forum (INTF) 2024.

This year, the International Trade Centre (ITC) is proud to present a unique feature: the "By Iraqi Hands" label, developed under the European Union funded SAAVI project.

What does "By Iraqi Hands" stand for? The "By Iraqi Hands" label is more than just a logo; it's a symbol of pride, quality, and heritage. The label represents a commitment to celebrating the best of Iraqi-made products, encouraging consumers to choose locally sourced products, and supporting the country's food industry. At its core, the label embodies:

**Promoting local products:** It is a call to support local farmers, producers, and manufacturers, thus contributing to the growth of the Iraqi economy.

**Quality and authenticity:** With the "By Iraqi Hands" label, consumers can have confidence in the quality and authenticity of the products they buy. It is a mark of excellence that reassures

buyers about the origin of items and compliance with the strictest standards.

**Preservation of cultural heritage:** Iraqi cuisine reflects the country's history and culture. This label preserves and promotes the local traditions, enabling them to be passed down from generation to generation.

**INTF 2024:** Showcasing the best of the Iraqi food industry

INTF 2024 will also be a celebration of the Iraqi food industry, and the "By Iraqi Hands" label plays a central role in this celebration.

**An ephemeral retail store:** At the INTF, a pop-up store will come to life, featuring an impressive range of over 300 Iraqi food products. This market will bring together the finest and most innovative products, offering visitors a unique opportunity to discover the richness and diversity of Iraqi food culture.

**Awards ceremony in honour of 10 Iraqi manufacturers** will recognize excellence and innovation. Their achievements, dedication to quality and innovation will inspire others in the sector.

The first day of the INTF, February 19, will mark the official launch ceremony

of the "By Iraqi Hands" label. This will inaugurate the beginning of an awareness-raising campaign that will highlight the importance of the label and encourage consumers to choose products made in Iraq.

It's an invitation to discover the essence of Iraq's finest food products and enjoy the diverse flavours the country has to offer. INTF 2024 is the ideal platform to celebrate this label and usher in a new era of growth and recognition for the Iraqi food industry.

Visitors will have the opportunity to explore, savour and engage with the diversity of Iraqi cuisine, all "By Iraqi Hands".

With support from the government of Iraq, the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, is leading the organization of the Iraq National Trade Forum with funding from the European Union.



## Providing enhanced quality and quantity of water, creating a positive and sustainable future #ForEveryChild in Basra

**Basra, 14 February 2024** - "Due to the decline of freshwater revenues coming from the Tigris River, R-Zero is perceived as the most significant water project operating in Basra and thanks to a combined intervention, we enabled access to safe and clean drinking water for nearly a million people in Basra," said Ms. Laetitia van Asch, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq during the opening

ceremony of the E-house in R-zero Project in Basra today.

This initiative, part of several high-quality water projects implemented by UNICEF and funded by the Netherlands, aims to provide enhanced quality and quantity of water, creating a positive and sustainable future #ForEveryChild in Basra.



## UNICEF has implemented a 4-day training bootcamp on Social Entrepreneurship Skills in Basra Governorate

**Basra, 18 February 2024** - "Acquiring entrepreneurship skills demonstrated that we young people are able to shape Basra's economic landscape," said Jaafar Aqeel during a training on Community Entrepreneurship Skills in Basra Governorate.

"I convinced my father to allow me to attend these trainings in Basra not only to learn but to develop new friendships and networks. Now, I have many new friends," said Hawraa Alaa, a 16-year-old young woman during a training on Social Entrepreneurship

Skills in Basra Governorate.

With funding from Canada in Iraq, UNICEF has implemented a 4-day training bootcamp on Social Entrepreneurship Skills in Basra Governorate, as part of a programme aimed at promoting the economic status of young individuals, benefiting 1,300 boys and girls in Baghdad, Anbar, and Basra.

"As young women, we seize every opportunity to build our experience and strengthen our economic future," said Gadeer Talal, during a training on

Social Entrepreneurship Skills in Basra Governorate.



## Iraqi small businesses to secure deals at Second Iraq National Trade Forum



**Baghdad, 19 February 2024** - The second edition of the Iraq National Trade Forum (INTF) was inaugurated in Baghdad today.

With support from the government of Iraq, the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, organized the two-day trade forum to help Iraqi businesses to identify and develop trade opportunities. The Forum is funded by the European Union.

More than 450 participants from the agriculture and agrifood sectors, business support organizations, international and regional suppliers, and investors, including over 200 Iraqi and international companies, donors and development partners attended the first day.

The second INTF comes after the successful first edition held in 2022 that helped secure participating companies' potential deals worth \$2.5 million through more than 170 business-to-business (B2B) sessions, bridging over 70 Iraqi companies with global suppliers and investors. 30% of participant companies that had participated in 2022, returned for the second year.

The B2B event remained an integral part of the INTF to better connect Iraqi

micro, small and medium-sized enterprises involved in farming, food processing, packaging and logistics with international and regional suppliers and investors.

These interactions are key for expanding business networks, facilitating business deals, fostering sustainable investments and promoting innovation while sharing best practices from leading Iraqi agribusinesses.

In addition to plenary sessions, high-level panels with practical workshops and B2B meetings, the 2024 edition of the Forum featured a trade exhibition called 'Iraqi Bazaar' that showcased hundreds of locally produced items in a pop-up store.

The label 'By Iraqi Hands' to stimulate the food industry and encourage people to buy more local products and support sustainable development was launched at the INTF. Iraq's Potato Sector Development Strategy was also officially launched on the occasion.

The ITC flagship report, SME Competitiveness Outlook 2023, was also launched globally on 19 February at the INTF. The report focuses on the impact of fragility on the competitiveness and growth of small businesses.

The European Union Ambassador to

Iraq, Thomas Seiler said: 'International trade presents a very good opportunity for Iraq to revitalize its agricultural sector, diversify its economy, and achieve sustainable economic growth. By fostering international partnerships and leveraging its agricultural potential, Iraq can become a player in the global market and an even more important economic actor in the region. The European Union will continue to remain a close partner of Iraq and promote its integration in the global and regional markets.'

ITC Executive Director Pamela Coke Hamilton said: 'With over one million MSMEs in operation, smaller businesses account for two-thirds of Iraq's private sector jobs. And they provide much more than that: they deliver crucial goods and services for the functioning of the local economy and for the wellbeing of its communities. As hundreds of Iraqi companies connect with buyers and investors at the Forum, they contribute to sustainable, trade-led development in the country and beyond.'

ITC Head of Country Programme in Iraq, Eric Buchot said: 'Small businesses forming two-thirds of Iraq's private employment, are key to its economy. The involvement of 300 businesses at INTF 2024 could be game-changing with a fundamental mindset shift. For real impact, fostering competitiveness and a market focused approach is essential.'

Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator for Iraq Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai said: 'The success of the Second Iraq National Trade Forum underscores the vital role of Iraqi SMEs in driving economic growth and sustainable development. Through fostering partnerships and promoting innovation, we are paving the way for a more prosperous future for Iraq. The UN is committed to supporting Iraq's journey towards economic diversification and resilience, highlighting the importance of collaboration at all levels. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive economy that benefits all Iraqis.'

The INTF has become a platform for enhancing awareness of pivotal domestic reforms, aimed at fostering robust private sector development.

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Here is the full text of the remarks made by the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations



Photo: ITC

## Iraqi small businesses to secure deals at Second Iraq National Trade Forum (continued)



Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, at this event: "H.E. Mr. Atheer Dawood Al-Ghreiri, Minister of Trade, H.E. Mr. Abbas Jabur Al-Maliki, Minister of Agriculture, Ladies and gentlemen, Distinguished guests, Assalamu-alykum.

I would like to welcome you with us in the opening of the Second Iraq National Trade Forum. I am also honored to be present here today in this important event with Their Excellencies Minister of Trade and Minister of Agriculture, as well as United Nations colleagues, including representatives of the International Trade Center (ITC), and representatives of the international community, including the European Union.

This year's event commemorates the resilience, innovation, and the tireless spirit of Iraqi SMEs.

In Iraq, there are more than a million SMEs, covering a wide spectrum of

economic sectors providing two thirds of the jobs in the private sector.

This is a tremendous added value for national economy, which we need to actively capitalize on.

Last year, B2B sessions generated deals worth millions of dollars, showcasing the immense potential Iraqi local businesses possess.

Despite the formidable resilience of Iraq's economic sectors, especially agriculture, tough challenges remains.

These challenges include regulations and the need for more support and resources to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) thrive.

SMEs struggle with high costs, limited access to finance, and technology.

Stories of farmers unable to afford quality seeds and young entrepreneurs lacking digital skills emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive support and new solutions.

Addressing these issues is not just about economic growth; it's about achieving our collective goal of Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, SMEs in Iraq are more than just businesses; they are the foundation to transform society, drive growth, reduce poverty, and empower women and youth.

They play a crucial role in accelerating achievement of the SDGs, diversifying agriculture and fostering green business practices.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Trade, and supported by ITC and the entire UN family in Iraq, we stand committed to fostering an environment conducive to SME growth.

Towards this aim, multiple UN agencies, with ITC leading the efforts, alongside ILO, IOM, and UNIDO, are actively engaged in supporting SMEs in Iraq making progress in advancing investment policies, intellectual property regulations, procurement practices, and enhancing competitiveness.

Dear Participants, Let's envision a society where every entrepreneur is not only valued but also supported and empowered to realize their full potential.

And our commitment must go beyond overcoming current challenges and foster a collective vision to innovate, collaborate, and uplift one another, weaving a tapestry of success stories across Iraq.

The journey ahead may be long, but with your dedication, resilience, and partnership, I am confident together, we are on the path to a brighter, more prosperous, and sustainable future for Iraq.



## Significant deterioration of water quality in Iraq

Baghdad, 22 February 2024 - "Inadequate infrastructure, limited regulations and poor public awareness are the main factors contributing to the significant deterioration of water quality in Iraq," said Ali Ayoub, Chief

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene programme of UNICEF in Iraq in an interview with AFP. "But Iraq's government is taking steps to improve water quality. It has developed a three-year plan to

strengthen the water and sanitation system to provide safe drinking water, especially to the most vulnerable communities."

#ForEveryChild, safe water.



## Germany/KfW and UNOPS sign a new agreement in support of local communities in Anbar and Sinjar Governorates in Iraq

**Baghdad, 25 February 2024** - The KfW Development Bank and UNOPS signed a new agreement to support the conflict-affected communities and to enhance their access to basic public services in Anbar and Sinjar, Iraq.

With the support from the Federal Republic of Germany, through KfW Development Bank, UNOPS will rehabilitate war-damaged shelters and basic community infrastructure such as water and sanitation stations and networks, roads and solar street lighting as well as provide capacity building training to relevant stakeholders.

His Excellency Christiane Hohmann, German Ambassador to Iraq, stressed: "Through the rehabilitation of housing and basic local infrastructure, we support IDPs in Iraq together with KfW and UNOPS. I am pleased to announce that we will expand our engagement beyond Anbar with an additional focus on the Sinjar region. This will support the Ezidi community to return home".

"The new financial agreement is a testament to the Federal Republic of Germany's commitment to supporting Iraq. The new funding complements and builds on the success of the project's previous two phases. Together with KfW and local authorities we

strive to support the country's efforts to improve living conditions for people as they continue to return to their homes.", said Mr. Muhammad Usman Akram, UNOPS Director of Amman Multi-Country Office.

The new agreement marks the third phase of the Local Infrastructure in Rural Anbar project with KfW in Anbar governorate. The agreement for the first phase was signed in December 2020 for the rehabilitation of 1,000 war-damaged shelters.

"We very much look forward to continuing supporting this project with a third phase. In close cooperation with relevant Iraqi authorities, we will rehabilitate war-damaged shelters and

improve basic living conditions for returnees in rural Anbar and in Sinjar", said Dr. Anna-Christine Janke, Director of KfW Office in Iraq. With the additional funding of EUR 15 million or more then USD 16 million for the implementation of the third phase of the project, the total project budget will increase to EUR 50 million (USD 54 million). The additional funding will help to continue improving basic living conditions for returnees in rural areas of Anbar Governorate as well as expand operations into Sinjar district in the Ninewa Governorate, enabling UNOPS to assist more than 466,000 women, men, boys and girls who have returned to the affected areas.



## UN-Habitat Iraq is increasing awareness on HLP rights and access to compensation at different levels of the community

**Baghdad, 20 February 2024** - With the generous support of the Government of the Netherlands through LAND-at-Scale, the UN-Habitat Iraq Country Programme is increasing awareness on HLP rights and access to compensation at different levels of the community under the project titled "Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights". These targeted awareness-raising sessions help a range of beneficiaries to better understand what HLP rights are, why they are important, and how to obtain them

through UN-Habitat's direct support. Further, UN-Habitat provides tailored legal assistance for the submission of compensation claims, informing beneficiaries about how to access services and enhancing overall access to the compensation mechanism. Since January 2024, the team conducted 6 awareness-raising sessions for a total of 149 attendees (36 female participants and 113 male participants) in Sinjar, Khanasor, Sinuni, Dhola, and Dugrey. Through these interventions, beneficiaries are able to establish security of tenure.



## Rainwater harvesting helps tackling climate change in Erbil city

**Erbil, 24 February 2024** - With generous support from Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) UNICEF and the Directorate of Irrigation, with the support of KRG's

General Directorate of Water Resources, are building Kardiz Pond in Erbil city. This project is part of several projects that UNICEF is conducting to reduce the impact of climate change in Iraq.

See the video to learn more at <https://www.facebook.com/unicefiraq/videos/402526648994662>



## A public park is being constructed in Jurf Al Meleh neighbourhood, Basra City

**Basra, 25 February 2024** - A public park is being constructed in Jurf Al Meleh Neighbourhood, Basra City, covering an area of 13,000 square meters, in response to community requests.

The place is designed to be a recreational area that encourages interaction with nature and fosters integration and interaction among both informal and formal settlers.

With features including landscaping, gardens, a children's playground, a gym area, food trucks and a football pitch, the park will benefit approximately 6,000 residents from the local area and its surroundings. The community engagement is crucial not only for building the park's identity but also for ensuring a collective commitment to its maintenance. The football pitch has been completed, and the entire project is on schedule to open by July 2024.

The NGO Janat Al-Frdaws Foundation oversees the construction, which encompasses site preparation, the installation of electricity, WASH facilities, and the provision of vocational training for the construction work. Trainees are gaining hands-on



experience by participating in the construction of the park.

This project is a component of a broader initiative funded by the European Union and led by UN-Habitat, aimed at

improving informal settlements in Basra by providing basic services and enhancing employability for people from the most vulnerable urban sectors.

## Launch of the Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) in Basra: a collaborative milestone for sustainable development and climate resilience in Iraq

**Basra, 29 February 2024** – Today, H.E. Mr. Asaad Al-Aidani, Governor of Basra and Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) launched the Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) in Basra.

The JCF, established following consultations with the Government of Iraq, and particularly the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers (COMSEC), aims to streamline governorate-level coordination by bringing together diverse development actors to avoid duplication, share information, and align activities with local priorities to enhance partnership and collaboration. This innovative mechanism spans the conflict-affected governorates of Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al-din, Diyala, Anbar, in addition to Kurdistan Region, and Basra.

"Bringing together humanitarian and development actors with government authorities to address the multifaceted

challenges, especially those related to climate change, the JCF is a cornerstone in our collaborative efforts," stated Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai. "Together, we are committed to fostering a sustainable and brighter future for Iraq and its people."

His Excellency Mr. Asaad Al-Aidani

highlighted the critical role of United Nations organizations and the JCF, stating: "The importance of UN organizations and their effective role in various fields cannot be overstated. The JCF is crucial at this stage for creating opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between the UN and the local government."



## FAO facilitates cutting-edge training program to enhance animal feeding practices in Southern Governorates of Iraq

**Basra, 02 January 2024** - Following the decision made by His Excellency the Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, to allocate 5 billion dinars to support buffalo breeders in the marshes, a major initiative has been launched, coupled with the Ministry of Agriculture's (MOA) strategic decision to expand and scale up the successful European Union (EU)-FAO project activities from Nineveh to other affected governorates. This initiative will ensure the support of 15,000 buffalo breeders and their 263,000 buffalos in the southern governorates of Basra, Muthana, Thi-Qar and Missan.

To ensure the successful implementation of the support activities, FAO in partnership with MoA concluded a series of "Training of Trainers" (ToT) programs. The first in this series of peer-to-peer training programs took place from 26 to 29th of December 2023 in the above-mentioned governorates. In this unique ToT initiative, 100 MoA extension officers were trained by their peers who had previously been trained by FAO experts and were actively involved in implementing successful FAO-EU Funded project activities in Nineveh and in Southern regions.

MoA Technical Deputy, Dr. Mithaq Al Khafaji, praised the effective cooperation with FAO, expressing gratitude for their support. He highlighted the timeliness of this program provided by the Iraqi government to address severe climate change effects in the southern marshes. Dr. Al Khafaji emphasized the initiative's alignment with local needs, supporting 15,000 breeders across four governorates. Trained MoA officers, equipped with advanced knowledge, will play a key role along with the provided resources, including 3,130 tons of molasses, 200 plastic tanks, and

9,388 tons of wheat bean, reinforce sustainable agricultural practices in the region."

Equipped with knowledge gained from FAO's expertise, these extension officers played a crucial role in disseminating best practices during the training sessions. The comprehensive program focused on providing extension officers with advanced knowledge and expertise on sustainable animal feeding practices, with a focus on climate-smart agriculture methods, molasses uses to optimize buffalo feeding, and efficient livestock management and nutrition. The programme further supports extension officers and farmers with 45,000 copies of comprehensive extension manuals on best practices in: buffalo feeding; promoting the cultivation and use of fodder crops using climate-smart irrigation techniques; and valorizing sugar molasses as a strategic feed supplement.

Explaining the significance of the training programmes, FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, underscored the importance of learning and collaboration, stating, "FAO is dedicated to empower agricultural practices which reflects our commitment to empowering local communities. By fostering knowledge

sharing, we aim to strengthen the capacity of extension officers to drive positive change in Iraq's agricultural landscape. We value our crucial partnership with the MoA and acknowledge the importance of EU support."

FAO Livestock Expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, added, "Innovative techniques, featuring resistant fodder crops and sugar molasses, have revolutionized animal feeding, ensuring livestock resilience and optimizing nutritional value. Introduced by FAO for the first-time at large scale in Iraq, these forages and sugar molasses not only enhance the quality and quantity of milk but also provide substantial benefits to livestock health.

The initiative aligns with FAO's overarching goal of promoting sustainable agriculture, resilient food systems, and ensuring food security for all. Through collaborative efforts and knowledge exchange, FAO continues to play a crucial role in the development of Iraq's agricultural sector, contributing significantly to the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).



## The first group of smallholder farmers completes hands-on training in soilless farming techniques

**Basra, 12 January 2024** - The first group of smallholder farmers just completed hands-on training in soilless farming techniques (hydroponic & aquaponic systems) at the University of Basra, thanks to Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) funds and support from the World Food Programme (WFP). A collaboration fostering resilience and innovation in agriculture.



## Basrah Gas Company and WFP Iraq launch a climate adaptation project to support smallholder farmers in Basrah



**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - Basrah Gas Company (BGC) and the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) have signed an agreement aiming to support local farmers in the Al Zubair district in Basrah through a climate change adaptation initiative which sets out to increase their incomes and boost agricultural production.

The project will introduce tested solutions to combat desertification and support water conservation in the farming sector. BGC and the WFP will collaborate closely with the Directorate of Agriculture, the Farmers' Association, and local farmers in the implementation phase.

The initiative will train farmers on applying smart agriculture techniques, modern farming methods (soilless farming), and water-saving irrigation systems. In addition, the project will also focus on empowering female farmers by building capacity and self-employment in cooperation with the designated local authorities in Basrah's Al-Zubair district.

"I am very pleased we have signed this long-awaited agreement with WFP. This agreement fits perfectly with BGC's sustainable social investment strategy. We are jointly paving the way for more than 90 farmers from Al-Zubair district to guide and support

them in unlocking the full potential of their livelihoods," said BGC Managing Director Andrew Wiper. "This initiative is the beginning of an enduring partnership and a pivotal component of our sustainable social investment and social performance strategy that aims to enhance the well-being of local communities in proximity to our operations."

This collaboration—which has come about during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28)—comes at a critical moment for global transformative climate action. The partnership between WFP and the BGC reaffirms the collective resolve to combat climate change in Iraq.

"Our strategic approach in Al-Zubair aligns with the urgent need to combat the effects of climate change in Southern Iraq. Al-Zubair district is one of the regions in Basrah most affected by climate change. There are frequent sandstorms, heatwaves, water scarcity, pollution, and salinity," said WFP Country Director and Representative for Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. "This project underscores our joint commitment to promoting sustainable livelihoods, community cohesion, and effective adaptation strategies for the evolving agricultural landscape in Basrah."

## FAO and WFP reaffirm their collaboration on resilience for food security and nutrition

**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - Today the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme in Iraq signed a Letter of Intent, reaffirming their collaboration on resilience for food security and nutrition.

Through this partnership, we aim to support national partners and strengthen data collection and analysis on food security in Iraq. Joining efforts, a comprehensive household survey will be conducted nationwide to gain insights into the conditions faced by small holder farmers and the state of food security in Iraq to promote agriculture sector development and improve food security and rural livelihoods.

This partnership showcases FAO and WFP's unwavering dedication to addressing up-to-date information on food security in coordination and cooperation with the Government of Iraq in achieving the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals.



## Yasser's Green Vision: where passion blooms beyond sight

**Baghdad, 21 January 2024** - This story is one of aspiration and hope despite what seems to be insurmountable physical limitations. This is Yasser Hammad's story. He is a government employee who was forever changed by an explosion that took his the majority of his sight away. Yet, despite all odds, he managed to find solace and purpose in the world of green spaces.

What Yasser could not see with his physical eyes, he saw with his mind. Amidst cityscapes, he envisioned an opportunity - a chance to transform concrete jungles in his city into vibrant havens that were sustainable and aesthetically pleasing.

"Yasser's understanding of the unseen beauty fuels his drive to improve his surroundings, and his conviction and passion for doing so is unwavering," said the Director of Habbaniyah Municipality's Directorate Office.

He goes on to say, "Yasser's insight and understanding of the hidden aspects of things have motivated him to contribute to the betterment of his surroundings. Despite encountering difficulties due to his visual impairment, Yasser has managed to carve a path to make a positive impact."

UNDP partnered with Yasser and many others through a training focused on the beautification of parks, gardens, and combating desertification. This UNDP supported training was his turning point.



"My knowledge and passion soared after the training," he says, his voice ignited by newfound zeal for a greener future. "I found hope again.

Yasser's advocacy extends beyond personal growth; he actively encourages colleagues and friends to join efforts in afforestation. Afforestation is when new trees are planted or seeds are sown in an area where there were no trees before, creating a new forest.

He firmly believes that such initiatives not only benefit the environment but also play a pivotal role in promoting good health. Learning about the positive impact of afforestation on increasing cleaner air and its contribution to the aesthetic enhancement of gardens, regions, and cities has spurred Yasser to keep pursuing his dreams.

"I may not have all of my vision, but I feel like I can see more now, as my mind sees the infinite possibilities of the beauty I can create. I am grateful for this training provided by UNDP," Yasser goes on to say.

Athraa Al-Ani, UNDP - Funding Facility for Stabilization training coordinator, underscores the vital role of the United Nations Development Program in fostering inclusivity. By actively promoting the participation of individuals with disabilities in capacity-building training programs, UNDP recognizes the importance of equal opportunities for all, irrespective of their abilities.

Yasser Hammad's journey is an inspiring narrative of resilience, determination, and the profound impact of insight in contributing to a greener, healthier world. .

## UNIDO and the Government of Japan pioneer food safety and hygiene for SME development to tackle food insecurity in Bardarash District, Iraq

**Baghdad, 22 January 2024** - The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) implemented a Safety and Hygiene Training Program for Small and Medium Enterprises in Bardarash

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) implemented a Safety and Hygiene Training Program for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bardarash District, Duhuk Governorate, Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq with funding support from the Government of Japan. Spanning from 17 to 23 December 2023, the program was an integral part of a UNIDO-Japan project, "Emergency livelihood support to mitigate the food insecurity crisis among vulnerable people in Iraq," that built upon

previous successful joint efforts to enhance the lives of refugees and vulnerable host communities affected by regional conflicts.

The main goal of the training program was to address the food insecurity crisis in the region. Sixteen business owners in Bardarash selected for the specialized training were those primarily engaging in dairy food processing and other food-related enterprises.

Bardarash, home to approximately 37,000 residents including many refugees and located roughly 88 kilometers (55 miles) from Erbil, the vibrant capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), has carved out a niche for itself as a crucial agricultural center. Endowed with a natural landscape conducive to nurturing livestock as well

as cultivating vegetables and grains such as wheat, barley, and rice, Bardarash stands as a testament to the harmonious coexistence of these agricultural pursuits.

In the past, the breeding of sheep and cattle predominantly served the purpose of supplying dairy factories with the essential raw material for producing dairy delights such as yogurt, a culinary staple cherished across the region. Subsequently, these delectable food products found their way to various cities throughout the KRI, maintaining food security and comfortable livelihoods for the Bardarash community.

Nevertheless, recent years have borne witness to a noticeable shift in market dynamics, presenting Bardarash with fierce challenges. Among those most

## UNIDO and the Government of Japan pioneer food safety and hygiene for SME development... (continued)



severely affected are factory owners and farmers, whose struggles have cast a ripple effect on the broader local community. The adverse consequences extend beyond economic hardship, translating into a loss of jobs and income, thereby impacting the ability of families to sustain themselves.

The diminishing interest in raising livestock, particularly for milk production, can be traced to dairy imports from neighboring countries. The surge in external competition has resulted in an alarming 80 percent downturn in the demand for milk derived from local sheep and cattle, compounding the difficulties faced by Bardarash and its inhabitants.

The UNIDO – Japan Safety and Hygiene Training Program for SMEs in Bardarash was designed to equip local businesses with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their performance in the local market and compete with imported dairy products. The thorough training provided a platform for sharing technical knowledge and skills in the industry, concentrating on workplace safety, and upholding strict hygiene standards. It also delved into business management techniques to help gain a competitive

edge in the market, covering topics such as optimizing staff allocation, implementing rigorous financial management procedures, managing employee relations, and developing strategies for effective promotion and marketing.

Mr. Dindar Fareeq, a trainer and the Manager of the Quality Control Unit at the Ministry of Trade and Industry for the Kurdistan Regional Government, underscored the importance of the training program, particularly in adopting modern and professional hygiene practices. "By blending their traditional skills with the modern methods provided in this program, the SMEs will be better prepared to improve their business operations," he expressed.

The participating SMEs not only make a substantial contribution to the local economy, but they also play a crucial role in offering essential employment opportunities within the community. Abdulsattar Younus, another trainer with expertise in entrepreneurship development within the KRI, remarked, "SMEs are essential for fostering sustainable growth in the Bardarash economy, playing a significant role in generating new job

opportunities. Developing them is crucial for leading many local families and individuals on a path out of poverty."

Mr. Barzan Mustafa, a dairy factory owner in Bardarash and participant in the training program stated, "With the development of the local dairy business and increased support, like the UNIDO – Japan training, local community members can once again engage in livestock husbandry, earning profits from selling milk to sustain their families." He added, "We never had access to this kind of training before, and all the information provided is crucial for the advancement of our products and businesses overall."

Another dairy factory owner and training participant, Mr. Jalil Khalil Mawlud, remarked, "The training contributes to the development of dairy processing projects, fostering the expansion of business operations and providing employment opportunities, particularly for unemployed youth." Mawlud also shared thoughts on the networking aspect, stating, "Furthermore, the training provided a valuable chance for business owners to connect. It allowed us to discuss shared concerns and tackle issues that had not been explored before."

A significant number of SME owners expressed a need for new and/or supplementary machinery and equipment that would contribute to the expansion and development of their dairy-producing enterprises. UNIDO in conjunction with the Government of Japan intends to supply such vital equipment for further supporting Bardarash businesses in synergy with the training, thereby developing the traditional food industry and improving the livelihoods of the local community.

## The roadmap for the second phase of the Single Registry Project defined

**Baghdad, 27 January 2024** - The World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq, the National Data Centre and the Ministry of Planning lay the roadmap for the second phase of the Single Registry Project, strengthening social protection systems for food security in Iraq in a two-day workshop. Thanks to the European Union for the generous support.



## Cultivating resilience in Iraq's farms



**Anbar, 24 January 2024** - By promoting sustainable agriculture, UNDP is empowering small farmers toward climate resilience.

From the sprawling plains of Mesopotamia to the rugged mountains of Kurdistan, Iraq's arable lands have yielded an abundance of crops, sustaining communities for centuries and contributing to regional trade. Despite the challenges posed by conflict and climate change, farming remains a vital sector of Iraq's economy, providing livelihoods for millions and ensuring the country's food security.

In Iraq, farming reflects the deep connection between the people and their land. For many families in rural Iraq, farming is passed down through generations. Children grow up alongside their parents and grandparents, who serve as custodians of the land, learning traditional techniques in cultivating the soil, harvesting crops, and preserving the environment.

In Al-Borkash neighborhood, Eeman Sami Gafel, 40, juggles her family responsibilities with her small backyard farm that provides them sustenance and extra income.

### Farming for a healthier future

In Saqlawia subdistrict in Anbar governorate, where almost every family is engaged in farming, Eeman Sami Gafel starts her day early. Once her five children are off to school and her taxi driver husband is on the road, she heads straight to her vegetable garden where she spends hours cultivating the one-donum plot of land her family owns and nurturing rows of tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, and okra.

Eeman got her passion for agriculture from her parents, who instilled in her the importance of self-sufficiency and sustainable living. Through her backyard vegetable garden, Eeman is able to provide healthy and nutritious food and generate additional income for

her family. Every year she earns at least 1.6 million Iraqi dinars (about US\$ 1,200) from planting and selling vegetables.

"I've always believed in the power of farming," Eeman says. "Through this small piece of land, I am able to harvest vegetables, cook nutritious meals for my children, ensure my family's health and well-being, and earn some money to support our daily needs."

Eeman also finds strength and joy in farming. "I started farming when I was young, helping my parents in the fields," Eeman recalls. "I learned from them hard work and perseverance, and I have instilled those values in my own children."

Majeed's cornfields are ready for harvest. For every ton of corn he sells, Majeed earns at least 1 million Iraqi dinar (over US\$700).

### A young farmer with a big dream

Majeed Abd spent most of his childhood playing in the fields. It was also where he developed his love for plants, that eventually inspired him to pursue biology in college. Studying plants and animals further fueled his interest in crop science, leading him to take over his family's 2.5 donum farm.

"I was fascinated with plants and the science behind their growth," the 25-year-old farmer explains. "When I studied biology, I realized that there were so many ways we could improve our farming practices to be more sustainable and environmentally

friendly."

As the eldest child in a family of eleven, Majeed is eager to improve his family's main source of livelihood by blending traditional and modern farming techniques.

"I want to continue what my parents started and expand our farm to create a stable source of income for my family. I want to optimise our yields while reducing our environmental impact," Majeed says.

The heart and soul of their family farm, Reyam and Wassim Farhana'akap share an unwavering commitment to their land and their parents' legacy.

A family united in farming

Reyam Farhana'akap and her brother Wassim Farhana'akap, two passionate farmers, have dedicated their lives to cultivating their family's land. Together, they manage two acres of land inherited from their parents, where they have been planting wheat, barley, corn, and clover for more than two decades to sustain their family of ten.

"Our land is important for our family. For us, farming is not just a job. It is an integral part of our lives," Reyam says.

"We have been farmers for many years, and it is our responsibility to continue this legacy for our children," Wassim affirms.

They plant wheat every November and harvest by May, and corn from April to July. Every year their farm earns at least 5 million Iraqi dinars (about US\$ 3,800).

Through the sustainable agriculture trainings, small rural farmers like Eeman, Majeed, Reyam, and Wassim are learning to diversify their crops and exploring the potential of livestock raising to increase income and drip irrigation to manage water more efficiently.

### Building resilience through sustainable agriculture

For many years, farmers like Eeman, Majeed, Reyam, and Wassim have relied on traditional farming and irrigation methods. Farmers typically



## Cultivating resilience in Iraq's farms *(continued)*

take water from borehole pumps to irrigate their farms, a labor-intensive and water-consuming process that has become more difficult and costly as water levels have receded throughout Iraq.

"Our harvest depends on the availability of water. With droughts becoming more intense, we know we have to manage water more efficiently," Wassim says.

To support farmers in Iraq adapt to climate change, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing training programs and financial grants to enable them to adopt sustainable agriculture practices. Farmers learn about crop diversification, crop rotation, soil management, water conservation, drought-resistant techniques, value chain analysis, and business management, boosting farm productivity and securing their livelihoods for years to come.

"I've been farming most of my life, but it was only after attending the trainings that I learned about drip irrigation. This technique allows us to

use less water while maintaining healthy crops," Eeman shares.

"We are learning to be more than just farmers. We are becoming entrepreneurs, managing our farm as a business, and exploring new opportunities to increase our profits," Reyam says.

In addition, Reyam, Eeman, and Majeed are receiving a 4-million Iraqi dinar (about US\$ 3,000) grant from UNDP to support them in implementing these new technologies on their farms. While attending the trainings, all three also received an US\$800 transportation stipend. Eeman saved most of her allowance and bought two goats while Majeed used the money to buy six sheep.

Inspired by the knowledge and skills he acquired, Majeed secured a 3 million Iraqi dinar loan right after the training to kickstart his farm's transition to drip irrigation. Now, Majeed's cornfields are thriving, and he is expecting a bountiful harvest before this year ends. He also observed a significant reduction in his water consumption. By using drip irrigation, he is saving more than

half of his usual water usage. "Before, we would spend four to five hours every day just watering our crops, using up a lot of water. But with drip irrigation, we water directly to the roots of the plants, saving us time, resources, and effort."

### About

Through UNDP's Building Resilience through Employment Promotion (BREP) programme, generously funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) provided through the KfW Development Bank, more than 1,000 small farmers across Iraq will be trained on sustainable agriculture practices and provided with grants to boost farm productivity and enhance agro-enterprises.

Reyam, Eeman, and Majeed are part of the project "Supporting a Resilient Economic Recovery by strengthening the Agriculture Sector in Saqlawia District, Anbar Governorate" under UNDP's BREP programme which is being implemented with partner World Vision. Over 300 farmers in Saqlawia subdistrict benefitted from this project.

## FAO's efforts with partners to address the challenges of climate change through the implementation of the Farmer Field Schools approach and women's empowerment initiatives in central and southern Iraq

**Najaf, 28 January 2024** – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration, with the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Water Resources, and other governmental partners, is leading transformative projects in Southern Iraq. These projects, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and by the Canadian government, aim to improve agricultural practices and empower farmers and women to drive positive change.

A key component of these projects is the implementation of Farmer Field Schools, and the Climate Wise Women approaches. To this end, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, conducted a five-day Training of Facilitators (ToF) workshop in Najaf, brought together 24 participants from the governorates of Najaf, Babel, Wasit, and Diwaniyah.

This initiative aims to encourage farmers to adopt Good Agricultural and Irrigation practices, including Sustainable Land Management and Conservation Agriculture, through the implementation of Farmer Field



Schools by trained facilitators on the targeted crops in the governorates.

During the training workshop, specific sessions were dedicated to discussing the importance of women's involvement and its crucial role in achieving goals. Special recognition was given to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for its efforts in promoting women's engagement through initiatives related to food security, nutrition, and rural livelihoods.

The workshop included a field training day in Al-Abasiyah district, with

primary focus on demonstrating sustainable agricultural practices, improved irrigation methods, and crop management strategies. The facilitators conducted assessments encompassing crop conditions, irrigation efficiency, pest management, and fertilizer application through the Agro-Ecosystems Analysis tool.

The training workshop was concluded with a closing ceremony attended by, Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji, the Technical Deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture, representing HE Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-

## FAO's efforts with partners to address the challenges of climate change ... *(continued)*

Mliki, the Minister of Agriculture; FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El-Hajj Hassan; Mr. Munim Shahid Hussein, Director of Najaf Agriculture; Dr. Hadi Hashim Al-Yasiri, Director-General of the Horticulture Department; Mr. Munir Ali Karidi, Director-General of the Agricultural Extension Department; Dr. Ayad Al-Bolani, Director-General of the Agricultural Investment Department; and other high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Agriculture. In his closing remarks Dr. Salah El

Hajj Hassan expressed that these initiatives go along with agricultural development plans and priorities, promoting sustainable food systems and building resilient communities with an emphasis on empowering women and implementing climate resilience practices.

Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji, expressed gratitude to FAO for the valuable training that enhanced facilitators' capabilities in promoting sustainable agricultural and irrigation practices through the Farmer Field School

approach, while also empowering rural women communities, representing significant milestones toward achieving our objectives in environmental sustainability.

This initiative aligns with various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



## 105 farmers in Barzan are receiving WFP's beekeeping training

**Baghdad, 08 February 2024** - 105 farmers in Barzan are receiving the World Food Programme's beekeeping training. Bee colonies and a package of essential tools await them once the training is finished to set up their beekeeping business and increase their income opportunities and food security. Empowering change: A remarkable 27 of these farmers are inspiring women ready to learn a brand new skill and contribute to a flourishing future.



## WFP Iraq and local partners lead transformative agricultural project in Ninawa

**Baghdad, 08 February 2024** - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), in collaboration with the Directorate of Agriculture in Ninawa Governorate and the University of Mosul, is implementing a multi-year initiative to transform farming practices in Ninawa governorate to boost food security and sustainability among small-holder farmers.

The WFP-led programme trains over 500 farmers in conservation agriculture, water management, and modern irrigation techniques to overcome the worst effects of the climate crisis that threaten agricultural production and livelihoods.

The initiative aims to integrate 'conservation agriculture' methods with modern irrigation to enhance natural resources; promoting no-till techniques, the initiative aims to achieve labour and cost savings for farmers as well as address the critical issue of water scarcity in arid lands. Ninawa, historically known as the "breadbasket" of Iraq, has seen several years of drought, water shortages, poor soil conditions, and limited access to resources, exacerbated by conflict. The project also helps enhance



biodiversity and ensure long-term resilience in the face of climate variability by equipping farmers with both the knowledge and tools to embrace soil conservation, use native seeds, and introduce drought-resistant species. Participants are also receiving agricultural inputs and assets WFP donated to the University of Mosul and the Directorate of Agriculture, such as no-till seeders, tractors, and storage facilities.

WFP is working closely with the Government of Iraq and its partners to address the root causes of climate change and adaptation and national

policy to support the most vulnerable families. Generously funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), this project aims to pave the way for sustainable agricultural development in Iraq.

"This initiative is an important step in improving food security and food systems in Iraq" said WFP Country Director and Representative in Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. "By providing the farmers with the right tools and know-how for smarter farming practices means helping them cultivate sustainably, using fewer resources."

## FAO's initiative in Basra is making significant steps



**Basra, 08 February 2023** – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is distributing shredders and bed shaping machines to date palm and tomato farmers in the

targeted districts of Basra, Thi Qar, and Missan governorates, with support from the European Union funding and collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Shredders are turning date palm and fruit tree waste into valuable compost and organic materials. This promotes sustainable agriculture by improving weed management and soil components, reducing soil temperature and water evaporation. Bed Shaping machines will have a crucial role in improving soil preparation, managing salt accumulation, and enhancing drainage and weed control for tomato and other vegetable-producing farms. Focusing on smart agricultural practices through using these machines, for saving time and effort, adapting to climate change, and contributing in increased production and income for farmers.

## FAO and the Ministry of Environment: starting the implementation of a comprehensive training program on sustainable land management policy formulation with support from the Global Environment Facility

**Basra, 13 February 2024** - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq, in collaboration with the Iraqi ministries of Environment, Agriculture, and Water Resources, has launched the inaugural workshop on formulating Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Policies. Supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), this innovative initiative aims to equip national decision-makers with the requisite skills and knowledge to advocate for and implement SLM policies effectively. This comprehensive effort underscores a joint commitment to combatting land degradation and promoting environmental sustainability in Muthanna and Thi-Qar governorates, aligning with Iraq's sustainable development objectives. Through the project "Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for Improved Livelihoods in Degraded Areas of Iraq," FAO and its partners are working to address issues related to land degradation and environmental sustainability by supporting national policy frameworks to promote SLM practices tailored to the unique challenges faced in Southern Iraq. By fostering strategic capacity-building and collaboration between governmental and local stakeholders, this initiative also aims to pave the way for sustainable land and water resource management, thus ensuring a resilient ecosystem and improving livelihoods for communities in the region. The inaugural workshop, which will be held from February 13 to 15, 2024 in

Basra, brings together 40 participants representing various governmental agencies and farmer associations. Over the next weeks, two additional cohorts will convene in Basra and Baghdad to ensure the comprehensive training of all 120 participants enrolled in the program.

In his opening speech, HE the Deputy Technical Minister of Environment, Dr Jasim Abdulazeez Alfalahi, emphasized the significance of the collaboration with FAO and other partners, stating, "The Sustainable Land Management project is a crucial step towards addressing environmental challenges in Iraq. The collaboration with FAO and other ministries highlights our commitment to implementing sustainable practices and safeguarding our natural resources for future generations."

For his part, FAO Iraq Representative Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan stressed that this initiative part of FAO's commitment, in collaboration with its partners, to support Iraq in achieving

sustainable development goals. By empowering decision-makers with the necessary tools and knowledge, we aim to foster resilient agricultural systems that achieve environmental sustainability, and social well-being." Under the expert guidance of FAO project team, participants will delve into a diverse range of topics essential for effective SLM policy formulation and implementation during the three-days of the training workshop. This includes policy integration, government efficiency, and sustainable agriculture practices.

Post-training, participants will be able to anticipate significant improvements in planning, governance, and policy frameworks within ministries, facilitating the implementation of agricultural systems that not only produce but also preserve, contributing to global environmental benefits and enhancing climate resilience.

This initiative contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDGs 2,13 and 15.



## "Community-Based Drought Preparedness" project aims to support the climate-vulnerable farming districts of Iraq against the impacts of climate change

**Baghdad, 14 February 2024** - In October 2022, Welthungerhilfe Iraq and UNDP, with the support of the United Kingdom, launched the "Community-Based Drought Preparedness" project, which aimed to support the climate-vulnerable farming districts of Iraq against the impacts of climate change.

The project directly benefited 260 farmers and indirectly supported 6000 community members, by equipping them with water-efficient drip Irrigation systems, droughts resilient seeds and organic fertilizers, alongside comprehensive trainings on sustainable agriculture.

We had a significant focus on women's empowerment, with 40% participants being female farmers, fostering an inclusive environment where sessions were attended by kids.

The project enhanced water efficiency



through community water leakage repairs and established 14 solar systems in the communities for sustainable, low-carbon irrigation practices.

As we celebrated the completion of this

project, it's not just an end but hopefully a start of a new era on climate resilience where communities in Iraq are better equipped, more resilient, and sustainably prepared to face the challenges of climate change.

## Workshop on policy integration and the effectiveness of sustainable agricultural practices held in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 18 February 2024** - In collaboration with Ministry of Environment and local governments, support from the Global Environment Facility, and the participation of representatives from MoE, MoA, MoWR, MoHESR, MoIM, and NGOs, the second consultative workshop for decision-makers on sustainable land management was launched today.

This workshop aims to develop strategies to overcome the challenges resulting from climate change in Iraq and was inaugurated in the presence of the FAO Iraq Representative Dr. Salah

El Hajj Hassan. The workshop will be held for three days, during which participants will delve into the foundations of formulating sustainable land management policies with the

participation of experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), addressing policy integration and the effectiveness of sustainable agricultural practices.



## FAO Iraq follows up on the tomato value chains development at the Al-Zubair tomato market

**Basra, 19 February 2024** - FAO Iraq Representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, and the team are following up on the tomato value chains development at the Al-Zubair tomato market under the European Union funded project. This visit aims to further improve the tomato value chain, boosting productivity and quality, and raising profits for all stakeholders.

With the European Union/FAO Iraq initiative in Basra, new tomato crop management technical package for greenhouse production, better



harvesting practices, and climate change mitigation technologies, increased crop quality quite

significantly. The outcome? A 40% increase in production per square meter and a 30% rise in selling prices.

## FAO Iraq holds a workshop to train Farmer Field Schools Facilitators

**Basra, 20 February 2024** - In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the agricultural directorates in the provinces of Muthanna, Thi Qar, and Maysan, FAO Iraq is holding a workshop to train "Farmer Field Schools Facilitators" as part of projects funded by Sida [Sida är Sveriges biståndsmyndighet] and the Government of Canada. This workshop, taking place from 18-22 February, in Basra, involves the participation of 24 trainees from the three provinces.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, inaugurated the workshop and

emphasized that this training is a preparation for what needs to be implemented with the targeted farmers

to improve their agricultural practices and enhance the competitiveness of their products.



## Phase 2 of the project "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq" discussed at a joint meeting

**Baghdad, 22 February 2024** - Today, FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, met with Parliament member and First Deputy of the Parliamentary Agriculture, Water and Marshlands Committee, Ms. Suzan Koger, and the Head of Veterinary Syndicate, in presence of FAO Iraq and the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)-Department of Defense teams to discuss the Phase 2 of the project "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq". Together, we will be amplifying the project impact across Iraq.

In Phase 2, we're extending beyond boundaries, covering 12 governorates,

reviewing legislative measures vital for animal health.



## Labor Issues



**Baghdad, 16 January 2024** - The President of the Iraqi Federation of Industries, **Mr. Adel Akab**, received the ILO Country Coordinator, **Dr. Maha Kattaa**, during her visit to the pavilion of the Republic of Iraq / Iraqi Federation of Industries at the Baghdad International Fair 47.



**Baghdad, 17 January 2024** - The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) celebrated in Baghdad key milestones achieved through their joint project. Around 200 loans have been disbursed to aspiring entrepreneurs through the initiative, playing a crucial role in creating and retaining over 1,200 job opportunities in the Dohuk and Ninewa governorates. Meanwhile, almost 3,000 young men and women, along with small and medium-sized project owners, underwent ILO-run business and financial training as part of the programme.

## Iraq takes major step forward towards ratifying ILO Convention 190

**Erbil, 26 January 2024** - The International Labour Organization (ILO) with the support of the European Union successfully concluded a transformative workshop in Erbil, Iraq on the ratification of ILO Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

The workshop was organized after the Iraq Council of Ministers recently made a historic decision to ratify Convention 190, positioning Iraq as the first country in the Arab States region to embrace this significant commitment.

The two-day workshop brought together key national stakeholders, experts, and representatives from various sectors to engage in discussions about the implications, challenges, and opportunities associated with the ratification and implementation processes relating to the Convention.

Participants in the workshop, held for two days, engaged in insightful discussions, sharing perspectives from their respective fields and collaboratively setting a comprehensive roadmap for implementation of the Convention.

Deputy minister Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) Alaa al Sukini said the event marked a significant milestone for Iraq, with promising outcomes and a shared commitment to fostering a safer and more respectful workplace for all Iraqi workers.

"The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs supports Iraq's commitment to ratify Convention 190," Mr al Sukini said. "This decision aligns with our ongoing efforts to strengthen labour rights, promote social justice, and create a workplace culture that upholds the principles of dignity and equality for all workers.

Participating in this workshop highlights the importance of this convention. We are focused on developing comprehensive legal frameworks and institutional adjustments that will contribute to a



workplace environment characterized by respect, fairness, and the eradication of violence and harassment. We are looking forward to implement the convention after the full ratification from the parliament."

ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Kattaa said "the workshop has been a resounding success in opening national dialogue on Convention 190, fostering a collaborative spirit among stakeholders dedicated to the successful implementation of Convention 190 in Iraq. The diverse expertise and insights shared have provided a solid foundation for addressing the critical issue of violence and harassment in the workplace."

Kattaa emphasized that the workshop's success lies in the collective commitment of participants to fostering a safer and more respectful workplace. "The identified strategies and roadmap for implementation will serve as a foundation for real and lasting change. We are committed to working together to create a safe and respectful workplace for all workers," she said.

Commenting on the results of the workshop, Zainab Al-Jayashi, a member of the Labour and Civil Society Organizations Committee in the Iraqi Parliament, stated, "The Iraqi laws were developed to address all cases of violence

and harassment in the workplace. Through the discussions during the workshop, we were able to diagnose the weaknesses in enforcement mechanisms and recognize the necessity of working together to strength these mechanisms."

Worker Unions Representative Aliaa Hussein said: "Worker unions in Iraq stand together in welcoming the ratification of Convention 190. This decision reflects our joint efforts to secure the rights and dignity of every worker through collaboration and active participation."

Workshop activities aimed to deepen participants' understanding of Convention 190, elucidating its provisions, principles, and objectives. Attendees actively engaged in discussions on the Convention's pivotal role in creating workplaces free from violence and harassment. The workshop also identified critical legal and institutional adjustments essential for aligning Iraq's national laws and practices with Convention 190, thereby laying the groundwork for its effective implementation. Notably, participants collaboratively formulated a comprehensive roadmap for implementation, delineating key steps, timelines, and shared responsibilities among stakeholders involved in the process.

Convention 190, is the first international treaty to recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. The Convention was adopted in June 2019, by the ILO's International Labour Conference, and came into force on 25 June 2021.

Governments that ratify C190 will be required to put in place the necessary laws and policy measures to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work. The Convention represents an historic opportunity to shape a future of work based on dignity and respect for all.

## ILO afforestation project in Kurdistan/Iraq boosts sustainable development and decent work

**Erbil, 27 January 2024** - International Labour Organization (ILO) afforestation project in Kurdistan/Iraq boosts sustainable development and decent work.

The initiative, funded by the Government of the Netherlands under the PROSPECTS Partnership, aims to address climate challenges and create over 700 short-term jobs for local Iraqis, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and Syrian refugees.



## The Ministry of Planning and the International Labour Organization held a dialogue on addressing informality in Iraq



**Baghdad, 01 February 2024** - During a dialogue session organized by the expert team at the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, the Ministry, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), explored mechanisms to facilitate the transition to the formal economy in Iraq.

The Ministry of Planning, in cooperation with the ILO, hosted a dialogue seminar on Wednesday, 31 January 2024, that focused on innovative approaches to tackling informal work and economy in Iraq. The main objective of the seminar was to explore sustainable pathways for addressing this issue and develop viable mechanisms based on three presentations.

The first presentation, delivered by researcher Hamed Ali from the Human Development Department of the

Ministry of Planning, delved into the phenomenon of informality in Iraq. Mr. Ali emphasized that the informal economy operated outside of administrative and judicial regulations, and posed a threat to the global economy. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to its devastating effects. The informal economy contributes remarkably to Iraq's GDP, but its unregulated nature results in significant economic losses. Recommendations were proposed to facilitate a fair transition of workers and enterprises to the formal economy, which included improving access to education and supporting small and medium-sized businesses.

In the second session, Igor Bosc, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO Social Protection Programme, gave an overview of the demographics of

informal employment in Iraq, with a deep dive into three most affected sectors - agriculture, construction and manufacturing. Mr. Bosc reflected on the positive and negative aspects of enrolling in social security from the perspectives of both formal and informal workers and employers. He concluded by providing several recommendations for supporting the extension of social security coverage to informal workers as a pathway towards progressive formalization.

The final presentation by Amaal Bani Awwad, Technical Officer for the ILO project "Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business", looked at innovative approaches to tackling informality and promoting transition to the formal economy in Iraq. She emphasized the challenges faced by informal small and medium-sized businesses, including complex regulations and a lack of unification in registration systems.

The seminar, led by the Ministry's team of experts was attended by Dr. Maha Abdul Karim Al-Rawi, Director-General of the Human Development Department and chaired by Dr. Adnan Yassin. Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Hassan, Head of the Expert Team at the Ministry, moderated the session.

## Workshop with Social Security Departments on challenges and opportunities for extending social security to the private sector in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

**Erbil, 11 February 2024** - The International Labour Organization (ILO), together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) co-hosted a workshop with representatives of social security offices to discuss legislation, policies and reforms needed to advance the extension of social security coverage to private sector workers in the KRI.

Upon the ratification of the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) in March 2023, the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, has embarked on an important process of aligning its national standards on social security with international ones. In December 2023, the Federal Iraq enacted a new Social Security and Pension Law (No. 18 of 2023) that



expanded social security coverage to all private sector workers, including in the informal economy, and introduced maternity, work injury and unemployment benefits. The Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) seeks to

enact similar legislation to advance social security for private sector workers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Following the institutional assessment conducted by the ILO to better

## Workshop with Social Security Departments on challenges and opportunities for extending social security ... (continued)

understand the capacity to implement comprehensive social security reforms in the KRI as foreseen by the draft Pension and Social Security Law, the one-day workshop in Erbil was intended as an opportunity to discuss the institutional gaps and challenges, identify promising remedial measures and explore areas for further reform.

The workshop brought together more than 20 representatives of the KRG social security offices, from as far as the cities of Zakho and Kalar, and opened space to engaged in constructive discussions on the existing social security gaps and challenges at the central and regional levels. It also provided a unique opportunity to collectively brainstorm on more robust

and rights-based approaches to implement the reforms on social security for private sector workers, including those in the informal economy, in the KRI, while ensuring financial sustainability of the system. Extending invitation to contribute insights and expertise to a wide range of stakeholders, the workshop was also a testament to collective efforts in shaping the future of social security in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The key recommendations that stemmed from the representatives of the KRG social security offices during the workshop included facilitating automation of social security processes in the KRI, supporting evidence generation, including on the financial

sustainability of short-term benefits and pensions for private sector workers, strengthening capacities of management and technical specialists of Social Security Department in Governorates in a comprehensive and systematic manner, and building awareness and culture of social security among workers and employers in the private sector. The participants moreover acknowledged and reiterated that the technical assistance that the ILO provided to the KRG through the EU-funded Social Protection Programme for Iraq: "Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform" remained of utmost importance to progressively build social protection floor for all in Iraq.

## Transformative potential of public works programme in Iraq's Ninewa Governorate

**Ninewa, 12 February 2024** - (ILO News) – The International Labour Organization (ILO) in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and with the support of the European Union (EU) held a roundtable in the North Technical University in Mosul to discuss the potential of public works in generating decent jobs, extending social security coverage and contributing to reconstruction and sustainable local development.

The discussion brought together representatives from the government institutions, Iraqi Federation of Industries (IFI), trade unions and academia, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences on establishing a transformative National Public Works Programme in Iraq.

Dr Aliya Abbas Attar, the President of the Northern Technical University, opened the discussion by noting that public work programmes could provide an opportunity to better match

education with the requirements of the labour markets. "Public works can provide on-the-job training for young people, improving their skills and making it easier for them to be employed and integrated into the labour market," Dr Abbas Attar said.

ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Katta broadened the discussion by emphasizing that "a well-designed public works programme can establish the foundations for a stronger, more resilient and integrated social and economic system that is capable of providing sustainable decent employment opportunities to inhabitants, covering them with comprehensive social protection and fostering the preconditions for lasting peace and prosperity."

The versatility of public works programmes in addressing multiple objectives, particularly relevant to the context of Iraq, was demonstrated through interventions by ILO experts. They pointed to key factors to consider

in the design and implementation of public works programs, including their relationship with existing social protection and employment programs; the importance of incorporating decent work principles and skills training to support participants' transition into decent work; and considerations for identifying specific projects to be implemented within the programme. Moreover, the presentations referenced international best practices from various countries, including India, Greece, Jordan, South Africa, and the Philippines.

The technical session was followed by an engaging discussion on the steps to be taken by the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, workers' and employers' organizations, the private sector, civil society, and community-based organizations, as well as development partners, including the ILO, in Iraq to accelerate the development of a public works programme.

The proposals included conducting assessments and analyses to guide the design and implementation of the programme in the Ninewa Governorate; identifying sustainable financing sources for the initiative; adopting relevant policies and standard operating procedures; and enhancing capacities at both the governorate and local levels for the effective implementation of the programme.

Reflecting on the roundtable discussions, Ms. Alyaa Al Hammadi, Head of the Employment Policies Department in the Ministry of



## Transformative potential of public works programme in Iraq's Ninewa Governorate *(continued)*

Planning, reiterated that the success of the public works programme in the Ninewa Governorate and in Iraq at large required genuine efforts from all relevant stakeholders. "It will also require overcoming all the obstacles that stand in our way together and allowing sufficient time for the programme to succeed. I believe that everyone is enthusiastic about public works that would benefit both the community and the country," she said. Wrapping up the workshop, Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation for Iraq at the European Commission, emphasized that Iraq is at a stage where all components of the larger puzzle are coming together — the need for construction and reconstruction for the future, a qualified youthful workforce, social security for private sector workers, and available financial

resources — which could be invested in the collective effort on public works. "The Ninewa Governorate has the opportunity to move forward and create more and better jobs that also contribute to the public good," she concluded.

The event was conducted as part of the EU-funded Social Protection Programme for Iraq: "Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform", which is being jointly implemented by the Government of Iraq, ILO, UNICEF and WFP.



## Joint programme launched to stimulate decent work and affordable housing in Iraq



**Baghdad, 21 February 2024** - A multi-partner programme to foster decent work opportunities for Iraqi youth and addressing the need for affordable housing, especially among lower-income and vulnerable populations was launched in Baghdad today.

The European Union has provided 20 million Euros to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to support the four-year programme, titled "Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT): Towards Decent Work and Affordable Housing in Iraq".

Aligned with the key national priorities of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

(UNSDCF) to promote decent work and provide affordable housing, the innovative project is the result of collaboration between the project partners and Iraq's Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Labour and

Social Affairs, Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, and Ministry of Trade.

Covering the 2023-2027 period, the BEIT programme will focus on building the capacities of government actors, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and civil society organisations (CSOs) to facilitate job creation and bolster affordable and green housing sector productivity.

It will also enhance the understanding and application of national regulatory frameworks for green and affordable housing, fostering public-private partnerships for sustainable construction, and strengthening the capacity of local businesses in adopting green and innovative practices.

The programme also aims to empower



## Joint programme launched to stimulate decent work... (continued)



ministerial staff and actors in the selected governorates to design effective Public Works Programmes, implement Employment Intensive Investment Programmes, and formulate policies to combat child labour while safeguarding labour rights and ensuring safe working environments for all, including women, young people, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Dr. Maher Johan, Eng. Sadiq Mohammed Hassan, and Mr. Adnan Kareem Salman, representatives of the concerned Ministries, expressed gratitude for the support from the EU, UN-Habitat, ILO, and ITC. They underscored the importance of this collaboration in promoting economic growth, private sector development, employment, and green economy initiatives in Iraq.

"We believe and we think that BEIT project is important for the Government of Iraq because it is in alignment with the Government priorities in terms of covering the existing huge gaps in housing and creating decent job opportunities for young Iraqis," said Dr. Maher Johan, Deputy Minister of Planning, Republic of Iraq.

In his speech, Engineer Sadiq Mohammed Hassan, Director General of the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, Republic of Iraq said, "we believe that this project will contribute to alleviate housing challenges faced by Iraqis which will enable them to afford a suitable housing with affordable price, reduce the unemployment rate, support to implement different housing policies and strategies that have been drafted and adopted in the past". He

further emphasized that his ministry will further reinforce the longstanding partnership with UN agencies and European Union to implement the project with collaborative and cooperative efforts that goes in line with the vision and effort of the Government to have a green housing for civilians in away with affordable price and decent job opportunities for those who are unemployed.

Mr. Adnan Kareem Salman, Advisor of the Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Republic of Iraq also reiterated that the project is one of the vital projects in Iraq to create decent job opportunities for young men and women while addressing housing challenges by availing adequate housing units. For us, this project is a solution to the problem of housing and could contribute to an improved work environment for all workers in the construction and housing sector.

"We have found out that this

partnership to implement this project is integrated in a way that it has right components, and the results are realistic and implementable. So, for four years to come, I believe that the ministries would seek a strategy to implement this ground-breaking project within the help of implementing UN agencies and stakeholders in alignment with the Government approaches and programmes that are under implementation by all ministries within the direct supervision of his excellency Prime Minister," added Mr. Adnan.

Ms. Barbara Egger, EU Head of Cooperation said, "with BEIT we are joining forces for creating more and better jobs for Iraq's youth, we are joining forces for promoting the Iraqi private sector and with that we are joining forces for creating more affordable housing for all Iraqi citizens". She further said that "the EU firmly believes that we can jointly mobilize the investment that is needed for affordable housing in Iraq. And by doing so, we can unlock the potential of the construction sector of Iraq construction sector for contributing to better and more jobs."

Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczi, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) stated that "The BEIT programme represents a significant step forward in our collective efforts to address critical challenges in Iraq. By focusing on decent work opportunities and affordable housing, we are not only aiming to enhance the quality of life for vulnerable populations but also to lay the groundwork for a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous society. This initiative underscores our commitment to leave no one behind, by



## Joint programme launched to stimulate decent work... (continued)

building technical capacities, developing evidence-based policies, and fostering collaboration across sectors. Together, with the support of the EU and UN-Habitat, ILO, and ITC, we are working towards creating lasting impacts that will benefit generations to come."

The joint programme will build the technical capacity of government employees, developing evidence-based policies, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders, including small businesses, in the housing sector. The BEIT programme strives 'to leave no one behind' by promoting equity,



improving living standards, and supporting economic stability, creating

a more prosperous and inclusive society.

## Security Sector Reform

### UNDP continues to support the Government of Iraq in ending corruption and boosting foreign investment

**Baghdad, 21 January 2024** - UNDP's Anti-Corruption and Arbitration initiatives (ACAI) is achieving significant milestones midway through its five-year implementation. Funded by the European Union, the project recently conducted its second steering committee on Sunday, January 21, at the State Council, with the participation of representatives from the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq, and the European Union.

Directly aligning with the agenda of the H.E. Prime Minister and his government to combat corruption, diversify the economy, advance e-governance, and attract foreign investment, ACAI has been acting as a catalyst for improved capacity, legislation, and a strategic framework for anti-corruption and commercial dispute resolution.

In 2023, over 1,300 participants, including public officials, judges, prosecutors, students, media, and civil society, joined workshops supporting the mainstreaming of anti-corruption efforts at policy, legislative, and advocacy levels.

ACAI has been instrumental in supporting the Government of Iraq in creating a legislative framework that fosters anti-corruption. Three legislations have been reviewed, and a draft Access to Information law is referred to the Council of Representatives. When enacted, this



law will promote transparent governance and empower citizens with information about public spending.

Through close cooperation with the Supreme Judicial Council, UNDP has monitored trials and investigative hearings related to over 300 major corruption cases. This has enabled the development of training programs tailored based on court practices and judicial proceedings related to corruption.

UNDP continues to support the Government in making Iraq an investment-friendly market by strengthening commercial dispute resolution legislation and practices. The ratification of the New York

Convention in 2021 was a significant step, and in 2023, a new Arbitration law has been drafted with UNDP's technical support.

As part of the initiative's holistic approach, UNDP has empowered media and civil society with workshops on investigative journalism and reporting. In addition, the project has galvanized action among public through the #PasstheBaton Campaign against corruption. The campaign, reaching 50 million views, received strong support from public institutions, influencers, journalists, youth, and women's organizations.

UNDP Iraq's Representative Auke Lootsma, speaking at the meeting,

## UNDP continues to support the Government of Iraq in ending corruption and boosting foreign investment *(continued)*

emphasized the importance of ending corruption for a prosperous Iraq. “We remain committed to providing essential support to the Government of Iraq in anti-corruption and commercial dispute resolution, striving to establish a secure environment conducive to

development, poverty reduction, good governance, and a thriving business environment. Our commitment extends to sustaining progress in legislative and strategic reform, e-governance, judicial integrity, commercial justice, as well as building capacity for

investigation and public outreach. We are thankful for the continuous and strong collaboration with the Government and the European Union, which opened doors for the success of this project.”

## Working together to uncover money laundering and financial crime

**Baghdad, 22 January 2024** - In a collaborative effort to combat money laundering and financial crimes, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq this week completed its 31st signature class ‘Task Force Workshop on Financial Investigations’ at the Judicial Training Institute.

The workshop is part of a diverse programmatic offer UNDP has been delivering to Iraq’s law enforcement, oversight, and judicial institutions since 2021 to strengthen capacities and consolidate collaboration. The project works with Investigative Judges, Prosecutors, Investigators, and Auditors from 11 key agencies from all of Iraq who form the task forces in criminal investigations to address financial.

“The main goal of our programme’s workshops is to enhance the capacities of the task force members and promote a collaborative approach across the agencies, which will strengthen the capacity of the participants to navigate complex cases involving corruption, money laundering, terrorism financing, and illicit enrichment,” Dr. Mohamed Almosly, the UNDP Expert and Lead Trainer of the Security Sector Reform / Rule of Law Programme shared about the workshop.

### New developments in Iraq’s judiciary

The idea that financial and complex crimes are better investigated in a multi-disciplinary task force collaborating on the case than a single institution that asks other agencies for collaboration in isolated requests was endorsed by an order of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) of August 2023. In this order, the SJC used the term “task force” for the first time and thereby created an official reference document that such task forces are in line with the Iraqi legal framework.

**Reinforcing inter-agency collaboration**  
Indeed, one of the programme’s pivotal outcomes was the reinforcement of



inter-agency collaboration in uncovering complex financial crimes. By fostering a shared understanding among participants, the training emphasized the importance of task forces, in which different agencies possessing evidence on a case can work together.

In the inter-disciplinary practical training approach, practitioners solve cases together. 1063 officials have already been trained through the Task Force workshops. In total, the programme has trained 1757 officials from all of Iraq, among those 282 women. The emphasis on the inclusion of women is a testament to UNDP’s commitment to diversity in the fight against financial crimes.

“The Task Force workshops on financial investigations, reinforced by the Financial Investigations Handbook, strengthened the ability of the Commission on Integrity to conduct financial investigations with other institutions. Cooperation helped us to uncover the illegal gains of many officials. Our work resulted in convicting those officials of the crime of illicit enrichment and were able to return the funds they stole to the Iraqi people,” Mr. Ayman Dawood Salman, Director General of the Extradition Directorate of the Federal Commission on Integrity.

Mr. Salman added that cooperation between the Commission of Integrity and Interpol also led to the extradition

of 18 wanted persons in 2023, an unprecedented international achievement for Iraq.

The programme provides the judiciary, law enforcement, and oversight agencies with a shared and better understanding of the steps required for a thorough financial investigation, and how to collaboratively solve deadlocks. This includes upgrading skills to identify crucial elements of the crimes under investigation, determine necessary evidence, identify key witnesses, consolidate investigation results into clear, accurate, and comprehensive reports. Making the programme sustainable, includes the delivery of a Handbook on Financial Investigations developed and endorsed by the heads of the 11 agencies with UNDP support. It was in the last quarter of 2023.

### Looking ahead

As the workshop series progresses, it contributes significantly to building a national network of skilled professionals capable of effectively combating financial crimes. By fostering cooperation and understanding among diverse agencies, the initiative aims to create a united front against illicit financial activities in the country. UNDP has delivered already 31 Task Force Workshops and will deliver 10 more this year.

Then, the training together with an e-

## Working together to uncover money laundering and financial crime (continued)

learning course will be launched on an online platform managed by the Iraqi institutions. UNDP's support of financial investigations continues in dedicated programmes focused on asset recovery and strengthening the financial investigation unit in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). These collaborative efforts are generously funded by the U.S.

Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

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UNDP in Iraq supports the Government of Iraq's efforts towards reconciliation, reform, and stability. The Financial Investigations task force workshops are part of its work under

the Security Sector Reform and Rule of Law Programme. The program's goal is to support the Government's efforts toward long-term peace and stability through an improved security and justice sector. Its work on financial investigations and anti-money laundering is made possible with the generous contributions of the United States Government.

## UNDP strengthens the Supreme Judicial Council's efforts in prosecuting corruption cases

**Baghdad, 25 January 2024** - Iraq has been actively bolstering its justice system to address corruption effectively. Through UNDP's EU-funded anti-corruption initiatives, UNDP is strengthening the Supreme Judicial Council's efforts in prosecuting corruption cases.

Carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq-UNAMI, through the Trial Monitoring Programme, UNDP have so far monitored over 300 court cases. The results of the monitoring have been shared with the Supreme Judicial Council through a Workshop organized



last week.

The monitored cases has enabled the development of training programs

tailored based on court practices and judicial proceedings related to corruption.

## The League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) hold the first Steering and Follow-up Committee meeting for the Regional Framework for Arab States (2023 – 2028)

**Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, 29 January 2024** - The League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) hold the First Steering and Follow-up Committee Meeting for the "Regional Framework for Arab States (2023 – 2028)" on Monday, January 29, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States. The meeting is held annually and aims to follow up on the achievements reached and challenges met during the implementation of programmes and activities under the Framework as well as to agree on the necessary recommendations and priorities for upcoming efforts.

The Regional Framework for the Arab States 2023-2028 acts as the overarching strategic framework for cooperation between UNODC and LAS. It frames how UNODC will strengthen, prioritize, customize, and deliver



support to the Arab region in effective response to some of the most pressing challenges faced by these countries and in connection with UNODC's mandates and specialties.

The Regional Framework articulates six focus areas for guiding UNODC-implemented programming at the regional and national levels and they are: a balanced approach to drug control, strengthening the response to

organized crime, combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, action against corruption and financial crime, preventing and countering terrorism and violence, and strengthening crime/violence prevention and criminal justice.

Furthermore, the Regional Framework applies six key accelerators across all programmatic interventions to speed up progress and maximize efforts

## LAS and UNODC hold the first Steering and Follow-up Committee meeting for the Regional Framework for Arab States ... (continued)

towards fast-tracking the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and they are: partnerships, women and girls, innovation, science, and forensics, human rights, youth and children, and inclusive and people-centered programming. The programme will also support UNODC's partnership expansion with Member States in the region to include current vital Ministries and Institutions relevant to youth, solidarity, education, culture, human rights, countering corruption; in

addition to previous partnerships with the Ministries of Justice, Interior, and Health.

The "Regional Framework for the Arab States (2023-2028)" was signed in March 2023 in the presence of H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of LAS and H.E. Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of UNODC.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of the relevant ministries and institutions within the Arab countries: (the Arab Republic of

Egypt, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Lebanese Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Iraq, the Republic of Sudan, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Yemen, the State of Libya, the State of Kuwait, the State of Palestine, the State of Qatar, the Sultanate of Oman, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates).

## Iraq's Ministry of Interior upgrades its criminal investigation capacity through UNDP and the Government of Germany's support



**Baghdad, 11 February 2024** – The generous contribution of the Federal Government of Germany has resulted in a state-of-the-art interview training room providing Iraqi police officers with a modern space where they can learn and practice proper interviewing techniques.

The interview room was inaugurated today by key actors from the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the German Government, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

"This interview room is an indispensable tool for police officer training, allowing them a venue to practice their investigation skills, build their capacities, and ensure human rights standards and norms are upheld in conducting effective interviews in a simulated environment", said Auke

Lootsma, UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq.

Boosting crime response through better interviewing techniques

The interview training support, including the training room, is a product of almost 2 years of work to support human rights compliance in policing work in Iraq, through improving the officers' investigative skills.

"All our German engagement in Iraq is geared towards helping to make this country more stable and prosperous. In order for Iraq to advance even further towards this end, it will – amongst many other things – be important to enable the Iraqi police to apply modern interviewing techniques in line with international human rights standards. We are proud to partner with the

Ministry of Interior and UNDP in this." said Dr. Maximilian Rasch, the Chargé d'Affaires at the German Embassy in Baghdad.

Almost 150 police officers have benefitted from this type of targeted capacity building. More importantly, these officers, including female police officers, underwent specialized interview training, where they learned critical techniques for collecting evidence as they investigated complex and sensitive cases, such as domestic violence and homicide. To ensure sustainability, a number of the trained officers have been selected to train their colleagues going forward.

Iraq's commitment to international standards of policing

The initiative not only enhances the quality of investigations, it also improves Iraqi law enforcement's compliance to international standards and norms, moving from confession-based investigations to comprehensive evidence gathering. Having this training tool facilitates simulation and feedback to trainees, enriching those undergoing criminal investigation programs.

Located at the MOI's Criminal Investigation Training Centre, this state-of-the-art facility supports the MOI in implementing people-centered policing, complementing UNDP's ongoing work in establishing model police stations in the most crucial areas across the country. UNDP's transformative work in security sector reform and rule of law has supported Iraq's government institutions in cultivating an atmosphere that encourages stability and security – both of which are precursors to transformative development, actively contributing to SDG 16 – peace, justice and strong institutions.



## USG Vladimir Voronkov highlights the need to strengthen the international community's resolve to address the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism



**New York, 13 February 2024** - In his keynote speech at the High-Level Interactive Event on the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism (#PVEDay) organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations, the Under-Secretary-General United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, highlighted the need to strengthen the international community's resolve to address the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism.

Here is the text of USG Voronkov's statement:

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Iraq for organizing this important event and for the invitation to address you.

Yesterday marked the second commemoration of the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism, established by the General Assembly in December 2022. Resolution 77/243 underscores the unwavering global commitment to combat the threats of terrorism and violent extremism.

Today, we stand together to address the challenge of violent extremism. A challenge that knows no borders or simple definitions. A challenge that spares no one: no age, no culture, no religion, no nationality, no region is immune.

The importance of our collective efforts in addressing this threat cannot be overstated. Today's event is an opportunity to highlight the essential and continued commitment from Member States, the United Nations system, and all stakeholders to unite in our common efforts against violent extremism. Recognizing that violent

extremism does not emerge in isolation, it is crucial to confront the grievances, injustices and conditions that lead individuals to radicalize and to join violent extremist groups.

In his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a prevention paradigm that confronts all forms of violence and fosters peace through mediation, social cohesion, and a steadfast dedication to human rights.

In this context, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy provides a global framework for enhancing counter-terrorism initiatives, highlighting the primary responsibility of Member States and the importance of international cooperation.

In line with the Secretary-General's 2016 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism continues to advocate for a comprehensive approach that transcends traditional security measures and emphasizes the importance of systematic preventive actions that address the underlying conditions and drivers of conflict and violent extremism.

Ladies and gentlemen, over the past fifteen years, the United Nations has refined its approach to prevent and counter violent extremism with its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopting a whole-of-UN and whole-of-society approach that underscores the value of diverse partnerships and perspectives in tackling the complexities of violent extremism.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism plays a central role in these efforts, including by serving as the Secretariat of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, a collaborative framework that brings

together 46 UN and non-UN entities, and connects with over 1,050 focal points from 137 Member States and 14 regional and international organizations.

By chairing the inter-agency Working Group on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE), we are committed to combining our expertise and resources across the United Nations System to enhance global efforts against terrorism and violent extremism. At the programmatic level, UNOCT is committed to delivering capacity-building support and assistance that yield tangible impact.

Our Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism has contributed to enhancing community resilience with evidence-based strategies, engaging over 3,000 beneficiaries through training, mentorship, and practical tools to counter extremist content online. Our efforts include peer-to-peer youth empowerment, and comprehensive support in crisis communication across East Africa and South-East Asia. In addition, our 'Global Sports Programme' leverages the power of Sports and its values as a Tool to strengthen cohesion and build resilience against Violent Extremism.

Our Behavioural Insights Hub in Doha leads innovative and evidence-based approaches to apply behavioural science to enhance PCVE strategies and global collaboration.

Today's event is a key opportunity to reaffirm our unity and resolve to implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Violent Extremism.

In adopting resolution 77/243, the General Assembly called on the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to facilitate the observance of this International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when conducive to Terrorism.

You can count on our continued commitment to raise awareness and enhance international cooperation in this regard.

Thank you."



## Building resilience: UNODC's multifaceted approach to empower Iraq against financial crimes

**Baghdad, 26 February 2024** - Over the past years, UNODC has fostered a robust partnership with Iraqi authorities aimed at countering money laundering and terrorist financing crimes. Through technical, advisory, legal, and institutional assistance, UNODC has significantly bolstered Iraq's efforts in Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT).

A Roadmap for Enhanced AML/CFT Measures

This collaboration spans various crucial areas, including preparations for the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Mutual Evaluation (ME), skill enhancement in conducting thorough investigations of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (ML/TF) cases, capacity-building for national authorities in cryptocurrency investigations, tackling challenges associated with the misuse of emerging payment methods in financial crimes, and crucially, addressing Counter Proliferation Financing (CPF) as a pivotal aspect of the global effort to thwart the financing of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation. Furthermore, UNODC facilitated Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) in criminal matters and enhanced regional and international cooperation to combat financial crimes in collaboration with the relevant Iraqi authorities.

In 2023, UNODC orchestrated a series of technical meetings to support Iraqi authorities in their compliance with FATF standards and preparation for the ME process and the on-site visit. The meetings and mock sessions brought together various Iraqi authorities and stakeholders, including the AML/CFT Office, Central Bank, regulatory bodies, financial institutions, law enforcement and investigators, border police, non-profit organizations' regulators, and customs

authorities.

The primary focus of these meetings was to provide frameworks for the effective implementation of FATF standards, with a specific emphasis on helping in supporting Iraq's efforts to identify, assess, and comprehend its ML/TF risks. Additionally, the discussions aimed to foster coordination among domestic entities to implement risk-mitigation measures. The meetings also offered guidance on establishing supervisory and monitoring techniques to address and mitigate risks associated with money laundering and terrorist financing across various sectors. Moreover, considerable attention was devoted to ensuring the collection and utilization of a diverse range of financial intelligence and relevant information by competent authorities.

This comprehensive approach aimed to enhance the capability of authorities to investigate money laundering, associated predicate offences, and terrorist financing effectively, thereby ensuring the delivery of reliable, accurate, and up-to-date information for informed decision-making.

Enduring Impact through Sustainable Contributions and Strategic Engagement

UNODC's collaboration with Iraqi AML/CFT authorities expanded to

encompass a myriad of topics. The partnership navigated diverse areas, from addressing ML/TF risks associated with new payment methods and virtual currencies to fostering platforms for cross-border exchange on ML/TF cases with neighboring and overseas jurisdictions and advancing mutual legal assistance requests. UNODC also worked on enhancing capacities for parallel financial investigations, unveiling intricate schemes and techniques criminals use to conceal illicit gains, including trade-based ML, informal remittance systems, and shell companies.

These activities were in the framework of a project on anti-money laundering and countering financing terrorism implemented by UNODC in Iraq and Jordan and funded by Germany and the United Nations Development Program office in Iraq.

In conclusion, UNODC's partnership with Iraqi authorities is a testament to the power of collaborative action in countering financial crimes through strategic interventions, sustainable contributions, and strengthened partnerships. As Iraq continues its journey towards compliance and resilience, UNODC remains committed to supporting its endeavors and fostering a safer, and more secure financial environment.



### Mine Action

## UNMAS Iraq participated in the Spirit of Soccer Organization (SOS) risk education session

**Erbil, 13 January 2024** - At the end of last year, UNMAS Iraq participated in the Spirit of Soccer Organization (SOS) risk education session at Shirk Secondary School for Girls in Hiran Sub-District, Erbil Governorate. Officials from the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) and Iraqi Kurdistan

Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) attended the session to observe the method of using sports, especially football, to provide Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) to the affected individuals and communities.



## Systematic integration of social behavior change methodology in all training activities

**Baghdad, 13 January 2024** - UNMAS Iraq conducted a two-day workshop for officials from the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), implementing partners and other NGOs to present draft recommendations for a strategy leading towards the systematic integration of social behavior change methodology in all training activities.



## An Explosive Ordnance Risk Education training session held in Al-Sabliat Primary School in Basra

**Basra, 16 January 2024** - UNICEF, in collaboration with the Directorate of Youth and Sport, Directorate of Education, and Directorate of Mines Action, conducted an Explosive Ordnance Risk Education training session in Al-Sabliat Primary School in Basra to raise awareness among both adults and children on how to protect themselves in contaminated areas. This program starts with training for young individuals and teachers. These empowered leaders then become

advocates, fostering child-friendly environments in schools through

engaging awareness sessions, ensuring a secure future #ForEveryChild.



## The contribution from the Republic of Korea enables UNMAS Iraq to continue supporting the Government and the National Mine Action operators

**Baghdad, 13 February 2024** – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes the contribution of \$ 100,000 from the Government of the Republic of Korea, which will contribute to supporting the Government of Iraq to reduce the risks of explosive ordnance contamination and protect the lives of vulnerable communities in Iraq.

Explosive ordnance contamination across Iraq, including improvised explosive devices in the areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, continues to threaten the lives of civilians in many governorates of Iraq. As of November 2023, there are approximately over 2,800 square kilometers of recorded contaminated areas across Iraq (federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq). Explosive ordnance threatens public safety, hinders the safe return of displaced communities, and prevents access to infrastructure and livelihood activities. The financial contribution from the Government of the Republic of Korea will assist UNMAS Iraq in continuing to support national mine action operators. After the three-year



implementation of the 'partnership model,' UNMAS Iraq will proceed to the next step of localization of mine action responses - introducing the 'direct grant model' in 2024, which will further strengthen national mine action capacity and ownership. Through this model, National Non-Governmental Organisations will become fully autonomous and with the knowledge and best practices gained through the partnership model, implement survey and clearance operations, as well as explosive ordnance risk education activities in the most devastated and vulnerable locations in Iraq.

Remarking on the contribution, Mr. Choi Sung-soo, Ambassador of the

Republic of Korea, stated "I am pleased to announce Korea's contribution which will enhance and promote UNMAS activities in Iraq. We hope that this financial assistance will bring a safer and more stable future to the affected communities in Iraq. And I look forward to further strengthening trilateral cooperation in Iraq."

Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, added: "UNMAS Iraq is grateful to the government of the Republic of Korea for its generous contribution. This financial assistance will boost national ownership of the mine action programme in Iraq and protect civilians from the legacy of explosive ordnance."

## Medicines to reach the in-need population in the target 7 IDP camps

**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq, with the unwavering support of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid, delivered the shipment to Heevie Organization in an impactful initiative to reach the in-need population in the target 7 IDP camps across the mentioned governorates. Together to support the local health authorities in addressing the health needs of targeted IDPs for the next 3 months.



## WHO Iraq Health Information Management and UHC/HSS team conducts a comprehensive capacity-building workshop at the Nutrition Research Institute

**Baghdad, 18 January 2024** - WHO Iraq Health Information Management and UHC/HSS team conducted a comprehensive capacity-building workshop at the Nutrition Research Institute in Baghdad on January 16-18. The training was attended by participants from the National Nutrition Research Institute and the

health departments of Ninawa, Babylon, Kirkuk, Baghdad, Al-Muthanna, and Anbar.

The workshop focused on the DHIS2 digital platform approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Health for health sector data digitization. Participants learned to enter aggregate and individual data, ensuring data quality through

validation, and data analysis and follow-up. This helped establish a communication group among participants to foster experience-sharing and enhanced knowledge.

To sustain the ongoing success, the World Health Organization (WHO) remains committed to continuous platform training until national teams gain sufficient experience and complete control of the platform. Arabic educational videos were provided for seamless utilization of the platform and fifteen electronic accounts were created to guarantee participants continued access and utilization.

This collaborative effort is a significant step forward in Iraq's health sector digitalization, demonstrating the joint commitment of the Iraqi Ministry of Health and WHO Iraq to advancing healthcare through innovative technology. Together, we pave the way for a digitally empowered health sector in Iraq!



## Emergency health care boosted across Iraq in 2023

**Baghdad, 22 January 2024** - WHO Iraq ended 2023 having boosted the crucial life-saving skills of medical and health staff in emergency units through the rollout of the Basic Emergency Care (BEC) course. This year-long initiative has strengthened the provision of emergency health care across Iraq.

In January 2023, WHO Iraq, working with the Ministry of Health – at the central and Kurdistan regional levels – organized a series of 17 BEC training workshops. These strategically planned trainings were held across Iraq throughout 2023, reaching 277 front-



line medical and health workers from various health facilities. Of this total, 42 individuals completed 3 training of trainers workshops and are now

registered master trainers.

All workshops drew on an in-depth BEC package jointly developed by WHO and the International Committee

## Emergency health care boosted across Iraq in 2023 *(continued)*

of the Red Cross in 2018.

Dr Georges Ki-Zerbo, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq, expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative's impact: "The BEC course reflects WHO's dedication to support the national health authorities to enhance emergency health care capabilities in Iraq. It provides a practical and systematic approach that is crucial for emergency practitioners to effectively manage life-threatening interventions."

Dr Sally Majeed, a dedicated participant of one of the BEC training workshops, shared the impact of the course: "The BEC course was truly a game-changer for us, the doctors working in the emergency wards. The teaching modules provided a universal approach that we can apply to any emergency situation we encounter in

our daily routines. Moreover, the participant workbook has become our go-to reference, offering essential content and key assessment points that greatly assist us in carrying out our life-saving duties at the hospital."

The BEC package, which includes a participant workbook, acts as a comprehensive guide that covers essential skills, a glossary of terms, review questions, case scenarios and a simulation. It also includes quick reference cards that offer ongoing support to participants in clinical settings beyond the workshop. The package is also designed to assist various stakeholders, such as governments, educational institutions and professional societies, in training emergency care providers within their designated scope of work.

The 4-day programme for the BEC

training workshop covered a diverse range of acute and potentially life-threatening issues such as trauma, breathing difficulties, shock, altered mental status, chest discomfort, poisoning and severe pain.

"The success of this comprehensive training initiative highlights WHO Iraq's commitment to contribute to advance emergency health care and create a lasting impact on the country's health care landscape," said Dr Ki-Zerbo, emphasizing the importance of the course for Iraq's emergency professionals.

This impactful initiative would not have been possible without the support of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and key partners and donors such as the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

## The Arab Health Committee for Emergency Preparedness and Response convened in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 28 January 2024** - The Arab Health Committee for Emergency Preparedness and Response convened in Baghdad with the presence of WHO Iraq Representative and Head of

Mission, Dr Georges Ki-Zerbo. The meeting elected Iraq as chair of the Committee president.

The Meeting brought together representatives from the Technical

Secretariat of the Arab Health Ministers Council, delegates from Arab countries, and participants from WHO Iraq and World Health Organization (Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office).

Dr. Ki-Zerbo addressed the meeting emphasizing that: "The numerous crises the region has faced for decades highlight the importance of collaborative efforts, shared planning, and prioritizing critical actions for implementation. Collaboration is the key, extending beyond our national borders to encompass our entire region."

The meeting concluded with several recommendations to be submitted at the upcoming Arab Health Ministers to be held in Baghdad next April.



## School Health Week launched in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 26 February 2024** - The World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Iraq, Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo, and colleagues today attended the School Health Week launch and shared the joy of Iraqi students. The event was organized by the Ministries of Health and Education under the patronage of H.E. the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mohammed S. Al-Sudani. The World Health Organization and UN partners support the national school health strategy.



## Representative of the World Health Organization in Iraq wraps up a courtesy visit to Kurdistan Region



**Erbil, 13 February 2024** - Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq, recently wrapped up a courtesy visit to Kurdistan Region where he met with key officials to discuss healthcare

support for vulnerable populations in Kurdistan Region. Transitioning from emergency to development is paramount for resilient health systems in Kurdistan Region and Iraq.

Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo conveyed regards from Dr. Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, and Dr. Hanan Balkhy, Regional Director of the World Health Organization Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office. The WHO Iraq Representative affirmed WHO's commitment to addressing local, national, and global health challenges to ensure no one is left behind.

“As the new WHO Representative in Iraq, I'm honoured to convey regards from the WHO Director-General to Kurdistan Region health authorities. Together, we are prioritizing healthcare for vulnerable populations and building resilient health systems in Kurdistan Region and in Iraq. Together for Universal Health Coverage”, said Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo.

## WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq visits Ministry of Health of Iraq

**Baghdad, 22 February 2024** - A significant development in health cooperation between WHO Iraq and the

Iraqi Ministry of Health was today marked by the visit of Dr. Georges Alfred, WHO Representative and Head

of Mission in Iraq, and colleagues to the Ministry of Health of Iraq.

The team had a productive meeting with key officials from the Public Health Directorate in addition to meeting with the President of the Iraqi Medical Association.

Meeting parties discussed the Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS), Health Coverage & Epidemic Preparedness, and more.

The Ministry's Director General of Public Health, Dr. Riyadh Al-Hilfi, emphasized their commitment to these discussions, highlighting the priority of drafting the CCS with WHO and other health partners.



## Family Planning

## UNFPA with support from the Iraqi Ministry of Planning reviews the annual activities of the Fund's country program

**Baghdad, 23 January 2024** - UNFPA, with support from the Iraqi Ministry of Planning held a meeting, today, to review the annual activities of the Fund's country program and discuss its accomplishments from the past year. The meeting was attended by representatives from government institutions, UN agencies and implementing partners, and focused on preparing a plan for the next five years with the support of the Iraqi government. The plan will prioritize women's empowerment and support for

population and development efforts in Iraq, especially the upcoming census. The new country program document

will reflect these priorities and serve as a roadmap for UNFPA's work in Iraq over the next five years.



## Getting ready for the upcoming population census in Iraq

**Erbil, 04 February 2023** - UNFPA and Kurdistan's Department of Media and Information recently joined forces to organize an insightful workshop for private media networks and government media personnel. The focus? Getting everyone up to speed on the upcoming population census in Iraq!

The engaging sessions, led by the Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Region Statistics Office and Central Statistical Organization, shared valuable insights on how the media can amplify key messages and boost awareness about the census. The media plays a pivotal role in the upcoming population census



in Iraq. Media professionals empower communities with crucial information, fostering widespread awareness and participation. Their engagement

ensures that the census is not just a data collection exercise but a shared societal effort for accurate and representative results.

## A delegation from the British Embassy Iraq visits facilities in the Kurdistan Region that are supported by UNFPA

**Erbil, 20 February 2024** - Last week, a delegation from the British Embassy Iraq visited facilities in the Kurdistan Region that are supported by UNFPA. The visit allowed the delegation to witness firsthand the impact of the UK Aid-funded projects and activities in the region.

During their visit, the delegation toured the Centre of Excellence in Sulaimani, which offers family planning services to women and girls, and a reproductive health center in Khazir, where they observed the services provided and distribution of hygiene kits to visitors.

The delegation also took part in an informative session aimed at raising

awareness about child marriage among religious leaders, highlighting its negative impacts on the health, education, and social status of young people. Additionally, they attended a

school session on family planning education, empowering female students with knowledge about their bodily autonomy and the significance of family planning.



## Mental Health

### The mission achieved its objectives of enhancing Iraq's national mental health program with a focus on the area of drug abuse

**Baghdad, 05 February 2024** - The World Health Organization (WHO) Iraq coordinated a technical visit for Dr Khalid Saeed, World Health Organization Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO EMRO) Regional Adviser for Mental Health and Substance Use Programme, to assess areas of support for the Ministry of Health. The mission achieved its objectives of enhancing Iraq's national mental health program with a focus on the area of drug abuse.

Bridging gaps in mental health in Iraq, Dr Saeed's mission fostered collaboration between the WHO and the Ministry of Health. The technical consultations made and the field visits

to the Family Medicine and the Addiction Rehabilitation Centres pave

the way for appropriate mental health services.



## A vibrant discussion on the vital role of youth in climate action



**Baghdad, 11 January 2024** - Joined by the young people that took part in COP28 as part of the Iraq delegation, UN partners led by the Deputy Special

Representative, Ghulam Isaczai, and the Netherlands Embassy and British Council, had a vibrant discussion on the vital role of youth in climate action.

UNICEF Representative in Iraq, Sandra Lattouf, highlighted the importance of young people raising awareness on climate change and being engaged on bringing change, as committed by the Government of Iraq in the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action last November. The commitment from the Government and partners to a continuous dialogue and a joint action plan is a giant leap towards systematic ways for youth to take climate action at both community and national levels.

UNFPA, committed to fostering youth initiatives, is keen to collaborate on this plan, paving the way for systematic youth participation in creating a greener, sustainable future.

## Collaborating for Climate Resilience!

**Baghdad, 28 January 2024** - The World Food Programme in Iraq and the Ministry of Environment, Directorate of Climate Change, join forces for a Consultative Workshop on Local Adaptation Plans for climate change adaptation and mitigation - a crucial step towards safeguarding the most vulnerable in Iraq.



## Celebrating the First International Clean Energy Day!

**Baghdad, 27 January 2024** - On the occasion of the First International Clean Energy Day, ILO is excited to highlight the youth of Basra who have embarked on an empowering journey with the Competency-Based Solar Panel Installation and Maintenance Training Course at the Basra Vocational Training Centre in collaboration with the specialized private sector in this domain. These participants are acquiring essential skills for a future powered by

clean energy. Their commitment is not just about learning; it's about leading the way in renewable energy and bringing transformative changes to their communities.

In collaboration with UN-Habitat Iraq, the ILO is implementing vocational training programmes under the European Union in Iraq funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis"



## UNICEF implements a campaign to raise awareness on the importance of water and child rights in the community

**Ninewa, 03 February 2024** - With funding from Japan, UNICEF, through the Directorate of Education in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq, implemented a 5-day campaign to raise awareness on the importance of water and child rights in the community. As part of this campaign, children expressed their perspectives on water scarcity and child rights in Ninewa through art.



## UNAMI continues to reduce its carbon footprint in Iraq

**Baghdad, 31 January 2024** - Building on existing green-initiative projects across all UN integrated office and accommodation locations, UNAMI's extensive solar power project, is making a difference and aims to attain 50 per cent of clean energy consumption.

The United Nations declared 2023 as "the warmest year on record". Our high dependency on power generation from fossil fuels will only further contribute to rising temperatures and accelerate the adverse effects of climate change.

The Organization is championing the adoption of environmentally friendly alternatives to fossil fuels, such as solar, wind, and hydrothermal energy.

In Iraq, ranked as the fifth-most climate-vulnerable country in the world by the UN Environment Programme, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is walking the talk to reduce its carbon footprint.

Building on existing green-initiative projects across all UN integrated office and accommodation locations,



UNAMI's extensive solar power project - which began in 2019 with an initial production as low as 11 per cent of clean energy consumption - is making a difference and aims to attain 50 per cent of clean energy consumption.

In the long run, UNAMI will be able to generate more than 5 gigawatts of clean energy annually, thus reducing the burden on the national grid.

We echo the Secretary-General's

message that "A fair, just, equitable, and urgent transition from dirty fossil fuels to clean energy is essential to avoid the worst of climate chaos and spur sustainable development".

You can access the video produced by the UNAMI Strategic Communications and Public Information Office at <https://iseek.un.org/article/unami-continues-reduce-its-carbon-footprint-iraq>

## Let's empower our youth!

**Baghdad, 08 February 2024** - UNESCO's Enhancing Employability for Youth in Nineveh Project (EYE-N), generously supported by KOICA, recently held its inaugural steering

committee meeting.

The EYE-N Project Team's Labor Market Skill Assessment for Mosul, Nineveh, laid the foundation for supporting three Centers for Vocational

Excellencies, ensuring quality assurance, competency-based curriculums, infrastructure rehabilitation, and connecting graduates with the labor market.

In Mosul, on 11 January 2024, within the framework of the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul Initiative, 125 youths (74 male, 51 female) have successfully graduated from a two-month Competency Based Solar Panel Installation and Maintenance Training Course at the Nineveh Vocational Training Centre. This training initiative is part of UNESCO's 'Enhancing Youth Employability in Nineveh (EYE-N) Project,' generously funded by KOICA.



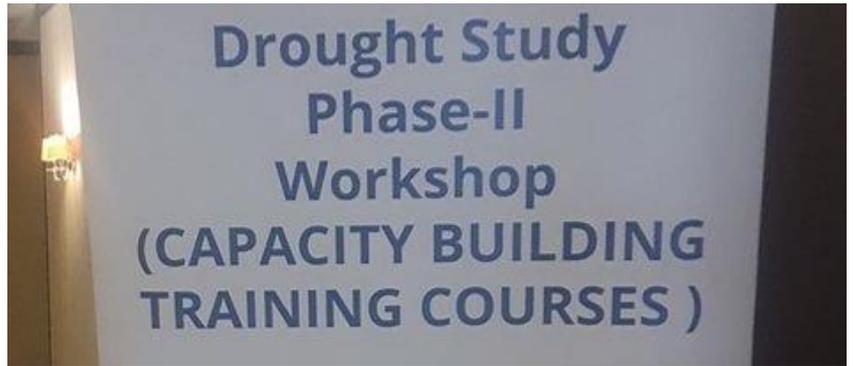
## UNEP and experts from various ministries recently finalized technical material for the 2nd National Communication (SNC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR) for Iraq

**Baghdad, 16 February 2024** - Hosted by the Iraqi Minister of Environment, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for West Asia office and experts from various ministries recently finalized technical material for the 2nd National Communication (SNC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR) for Iraq and launched the technical work on the Biennial Transparency Report.



## Exciting strides towards resilience!

**Baghdad, 16 February 2024** - The World Food Programme (WFP) is actively supporting the Government of Iraq with a comprehensive drought study. Our policy initiatives aim to enhance preparedness and sustainable solutions, ensuring food security in the face of climate challenges. Phase I of the Drought Study finished in April 2023, and we're geared up for Phase II!



## A very special visit to the WFP mangrove project in Basra

**Basra, 20 February 2024** - The World Food Programme (WFP) had a very special visit to the WFP mangrove project in Basra. The International Academy of Iraq school and representatives of the school met with WFP Iraq and the staff of the Marine Science Centre and had a tour in the nursery, where they learned about the mangrove ecosystem.



## "How to Work in the Green Economy?" workshop held in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 26 February 2024** - The International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Iraq (MOEN) and funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), recently completed a successful training workshop in Baghdad focused on ILO tool "How to Work in the Green Economy?"

This workshop brought together 20 passionate young Iraqis who participated in COP 28 alongside 10 dedicated MOEN staff members. Over three days, they explored the principles of the green economy, its potential for sustainable development and decent job creation, specifically for youth. Participants gained valuable skills and knowledge in green



jobs, green entrepreneurship, and business development.

During the workshop, we collaborated with the Iraqi Private Banks League - Green House Project in a tree-planting campaign near the Baghdad Governorate building, as part of the initiative launched by the Iraqi Prime Minister a year ago to plant 5 million trees across Iraq.

The ILO and Italy are proud to invest in the future of Iraq by empowering young people to be drivers of positive change. They are now equipped to share their knowledge and inspire others to contribute to a greener, more sustainable

economy.

This initiative falls under the "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 Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - Jordan and Iraq - AICS Amman. 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".

## FAO Iraq Representative at the Baghdad International Dialogue gives insights on regional collaboration and trust-building

Baghdad, 25 February 2024 - FAO Iraq Representative Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan took part as a panelist at the

Baghdad International Dialogue. He gave insights on regional collaboration and trust-building, crucial for

addressing environmental challenges in Iraq and its neighboring regions.

During the dialogue, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan emphasized the importance of regional collaboration in addressing environmental challenges, drawing on FAO's expertise and experience. Cross-sectoral partnerships are key for advancing food and water security.

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan also addressed strategies for enhancing trust and fostering dialogue among diverse stakeholders in environmental sustainability efforts. Participatory approaches and capacity development are essential for informed public discourse.



## Sarachinar Nursery increases its capacity from 250,000 to 1.5 million seedlings a year

Baghdad, 27 February 2024 - A year ago, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq supported Sarachinar Nursery to increase its capacity from 250,000 to 1.5 million seedlings a year. With 21 multispans greenhouses using sprinklers running on solar energy, the nursery has surpassed the target achieving 1.7 million seedlings.

By November 2024, 1 million of these seedlings will be planted making a huge contribution to mitigating climate change and sequestering carbon dioxide. If we can replicate this in 10 other nurseries, we can produce 20 million seedlings/year, thanks to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ).



## UNEP – Iraqi Ministry of Environment high level meeting

Nairobi, Kenya, 28 February 2024 - Productive talks at UNEA-6 today between UNEP Representative and Regional Director for the UN Environment Programme West Asia, Mr. Sami Dimassi, and Iraq's Minister of Environment, Eng. Nizar Amedi, exploring avenues for impactful collaborations and future programmes.

The sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), takes place from 26 February to 1 March 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.



## Mass for peace was joyfully held on the main altar of Our Lady of the Hour for the first time

**Mosul, 01 January 2024** - Marking an historic moment in ongoing restoration by UNESCO, Mass for peace was joyfully held on the main altar of Our Lady of the Hour for the first time. The occasion was graced by the presence of Fr. Gerard Timoner III, the Master of the Dominican Order, who travelled from Rome.



## UNESCO delegation meets the Governor of Dohuk

**Dohuk, 17 January 2024** - The Head of Culture at UNESCO Iraq Office, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, recently engaged in a meeting with the Governor of Dohuk, H.E. Dr. Ali Tatar. The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of various cultural heritage site developments within Dohuk Governorate.

The discussion encompassed the advancements made in the development and improvement of key cultural sites, notably the Charsteen cave site, the Assyrian Aqueduct at Garwana site, and Amedy. Future areas of collaboration were also explored, with a focus on preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage prevalent in the governorate.

UNESCO expressed its gratitude for the Governor's steadfast commitment and support, acknowledging his close monitoring of ongoing projects. Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to

fostering increased collaboration on future initiatives aimed at the preservation and rehabilitation of additional cultural heritage sites in Dohuk Governorate.



## UNESCO project funded by the United Arab Emirates includes the reconstruction and improvement of the entire Al-Nouri Complex

**Mosul, 19 January 2024** - Beyond the iconic Al-Nouri Prayer Hall, the UNESCO project funded by the United Arab Emirates includes the reconstruction and improvement of the entire Al-Nouri Complex, based on the expectations expressed by the religious

authorities and residents of Mosul - Bigger Summer Praying Area, Improved Ablution facilities, Gates and fences, Community Spaces. Celebrating the revival of cultural heritage. The Khalooha Ajmal

Foundation breathes new life into a historic house in the Old City of Mosul, restored by UNESCO. Embracing creativity and community, it's a joy to see the city of Mosul enriched by these repurposed spaces.



## Minister of Culture receives UNESCO delegation



**Baghdad, 25 January 2024-** His Excellency, the Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities, Dr. Ahmed Fakkak Al-Badrani, received today,

Wednesday, in his office at the ministry headquarters, a delegation from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Mr. Husamaldeen El-Zubi, Public Information Officer, and Ms. Stefanie Grussinger, Cultural Officer, in the presence of the Director of SBAH, Mr. Ali Obeid Shalgham.

Mr. Fontani confirmed the nearing completion of work on the Dominican Fathers' Church "Al-Sa'a" in Mosul, and set a date for the opening of this important religious architectural monument. He also highlighted the ongoing efforts at the Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Al-Tahera

Church in Old Mosul. Mr. Fontani provided a detailed explanation of these projects and the stages of reconstruction through visual materials and videos for the Minister.

Al-Badrani stressed the importance of consulting with the local community on all developments, ensuring their awareness, and soliciting the opinions of experts and residents in the region regarding the ongoing projects. He emphasized the need for the involvement of local residents, ministry personnel overseeing the projects, and the implementing organization, considering the significant importance of UNESCO's reconstruction of religious landmarks and monuments to the people of Mosul.

## UNESCO announces the successful completion of the restoration of the Palatial House of Suleiman Al-Sayegh, located in the heart of Mosul's Old City

**Mosul, 13 February 2024** - It's with great pleasure that we announce the successful completion of the restoration of the Palatial House of Suleiman Al-Sayegh, located in the heart of Mosul's Old City.

This momentous occasion was honored with the presence of distinguished guests including Mr. David Haely, Head of Political Section and Barbara Egger, Head of Development Cooperation, at the European Union in Iraq and the accompanying delegation, Mr. Bashar Ata Kazem, Assistant Director General of the Heritage Department at the Ministry of Culture, Mr. Ruwayd Al Laila, Director of State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Nineveh, and Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, UNESCO's Chief of Culture Programme in Iraq, alongside the dedicated project team.

Together, we shared in the joy and pride of this remarkable achievement.

This restoration, carried out with the dedicated efforts of UNESCO and the generous funding of the European Union, has brought back the iconic Palatial House to its original splendor after almost 70% of it was severely damaged by the conflict. The Palatial House now stands as a symbol of Mosul's rich heritage and cultural legacy, showcasing the city's historical

depth and architectural beauty.

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai: "A very important step forward in the recovery and revival of historical and cultural sites in Mosul destroyed during the conflict. UN continues to remain a trusted and reliable partner to the Government of Iraq in its drive to full recovery from the conflict".



## UNESCO's Director-General meets Iraqi Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities

**Abu Dhabi, 15 February 2024** - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "Delighted to meet again with Dr. Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani, Iraq Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, in Abu Dhabi. We discussed the progress of the UNESCO initiative in Mosul and the next steps for our cooperation on preserving and promoting Iraqi cultural heritage".



## UNESCO in partnership with the Communication and Media Commission (CMC) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) has launched the free of charge internet connection to 3,000 schools

**Baghdad, 03 December 2023** - UNESCO in partnership with the Communication and Media Commission (CMC) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) has launched the free of charge internet connection to 3,000 schools in 9 General Directorates of Education (GDoE) (Baghdad/ Rasafa 3 and Karkh 1, Basrah, Missan, Thiqr, Najaf, Anbar, Muthana and Al-Qadisiyah. This joint effort between UNESCO, CMC and MoE is part of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) project that funded by the European Union.

The provision of the free of charge internet connection to schools will facilitate the work of the planners at the level of MoE, GDoE and schools through the generating of reports and educational indicators related the school buildings, school

administrations, teachers and students at the level of schools. Furthermore, using EMIS will significantly improve evidence educational planning and management in the Education sector in

Iraq.

UNESCO expresses its special thanks to CMC and to the MoE for the continuous efforts in improving internet accessibility in schools in Iraq.



## Jeelan's journey: empowering adolescence in the face of adversity

**Dohuk, 18 December 2023** - In a corner of the bustling Domiz camp for Syrian refugees, a remarkable transformation is quietly taking place. It all starts within the confines of the child protection center, where Jeelan, a motivated girl born in 2010, is changing her life's path thanks to the Adolescent Girls Toolkit course. Despite the difficulties of camp life, Jeelan's narrative demonstrates the immense power of education and personal development.

### From Syria to Domiz: A Story of Resilience

Jeelan is an eighth grader at Derin School in Domiz camp, where she is part of a family of six, with two brothers and a sister, all under the loving care of her parents. Originating from the village of Gre Pre in Qamishli, Syria, Jeelan's memories of her early life and the turbulent times of war are somewhat distant. Yet, at the age of 13, she is carving out a future filled with potential and opportunity.

Jeelan's passion for learning is evident, with a particular love for the English language. However, her story goes beyond academic success; it's a tale of personal growth and empowerment, all thanks to her participation in the Adolescent Girls Toolkit course. This program is a joint effort by UNICEF and the Department of Labor and Social Affairs, with support from the Isle of Man Government.

### Learning Beyond Education

For two years now, Jeelan has actively engaged with the program, and the



changes in her life are palpable. She speaks of newfound self-assuredness, the ability to handle psychological pressures, and a liberation from the clutches of depression. "We receive invaluable advice and positive sayings, which I apply in my life to navigate its challenges," Jeelan shares with a confident smile.

Beyond personal development, the course has broadened Jeelan's horizons and skill set. "I've also learned how to develop myself further, and the English language," she exclaims.

However, the program is not solely about learning. It's a place of camaraderie and joy. "This place is far from boring; we have dedicated time for both learning and fun. We indulge in handicrafts like wool work and accessory-making, not to mention the myriad of games they used to play with us when I was younger,"

Jeelan notes.

Jeelan's unwavering support network, consisting of her family and friends, propels her towards her dream of becoming a pilot. With her unyielding determination and the backing of her loved ones, there is no doubt that she is destined to reach for the skies.

Jeelan's story is a testament to the power of education, community, and personal growth. Through the Adolescent Girls Toolkit course, she has not only gained critical skills but also the confidence to pursue her dreams. In the face of adversity, Jeelan serves as an inspiration, reminding us that with the right opportunities and support, one can rise above life's challenges and turn dreams into reality.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF

## Empowering parents and caregivers to give their children the best start in life

**Baghdad, 14 January 2024** - With funding from Isle of Man Government and UNICEF support, the Erbil Directorate of Social Affairs is empowering parents and caregivers with practical tools and techniques through a parenting program to give their children the best start in life. This contribution is helping create a brighter future #ForEveryChild.



## UNICEF's mission to reintegrate through education

**Ninewa, 07 January 2024** - UNICEF, supported by funding from the Government of Japan, takes a proactive stance in addressing the challenges faced by Iraqi children returning from northeast Syria. At Al-Jadaa 1 School in the Al-Jadaa rehabilitation center in Ninewa governorate, specialized courses on psychosocial support and classroom management for teachers have been implemented, facilitating the transfer of valuable experiences. These courses serve to inspire and support these children on their journey of educational reintegration.

Al-Jadaa 1 rehabilitation center, an important stop for Iraqi families affected by conflict on their way back, became a beacon of hope for those returning from northeast Syria and Al-Hol camp. In early 2022, Ramadhan Ismaiel, a 47-year-old originally from Imam Gharbi village in Qayara district, took the role of school principal at Al-Jadaa 1 School within the rehabilitation center. His journey from being an English language teacher in his village to managing Al-Jadaa 1 School marked a significant shift in focus—from conventional academics to a holistic approach addressing the emotional toll on war-affected children. Ramadhan wasn't just managing a school; he was shaping the future of children who had endured the harsh

realities of displacement and conflict.

The far-reaching effects of psychosocial support and classroom management training

The school swiftly transformed into a sanctuary for 540 students aged 6-17, individuals who had lost precious years due to multiple displacements. Ramadhan, a dedicated teacher who underwent psychosocial support and classroom management training as part of the transformative teacher training programme, discovered innovative approaches to impart knowledge and reintegrate these resilient children into society.

"In the beginning, we encountered numerous challenges," acknowledged Ramadhan. Students initially showed little interest in studying, leading to a series of meetings with parents. Together, they emphasized the significance of education not only for academic success but also as a tool for a better future, even if it meant someday living in another country. Ramadhan instilled a sense of discipline and hygiene, encouraging students to wear shoes, maintain cleanliness, and present themselves with pride.

The impact of the teacher training programme became evident in the positive changes witnessed within the school. "Many things changed after the teachers' training. Now, our students



are interested in learning and eagerly attend school. I can say these children have transformed about 90% – moving from a state of conflict to a renewed enthusiasm for education and a more organized way of life," Ramadhan shared proudly.

Al-Jadaa 1 school, once a place of struggle, has emerged as a testament to the resilience of war-affected children and the transformative power of compassionate educators like Ramadhan. As the children embraced learning with newfound vigor, the school evolved beyond being a mere educational institution, becoming a shining light guiding them toward a brighter, more promising future.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF

## The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF, launches a groundbreaking document for Early Childhood Education

**Baghdad, 11 January 2024** - The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF, and with the support of The German Government, through the KfW Development Bank, has launched a groundbreaking document for Early Childhood Education.

Aligned with the National Strategy for Early Childhood, it sets quality

standards for teachers, head teachers, supervisors, learning environments, and curriculum, aiming for total quality in kindergartens. Accessible to all stakeholders, this document is the result of collaborative efforts and reflects the commitment of the Ministry of Education to ensure provision of quality learning at early age.



## UNESCO, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Mosul University conducted a joint visit to the Holy Abbasid Shrine



**Karbala, 10 January 2024** - UNESCO, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Mosul University conducted a joint visit to the Holy Abbasid Shrine in Karbala to learn from the modern Library Management Information System adopted and applied by the Holy Abbasid Shrine and a tour of the

different library functions. The visit resulted in an agreement to establish partnership between Mosul University and the Holy Abbasid Shrine, to leverage their experience in libraries development and enrich Mosul Library with more expertise and resources. The study visit is organized in the

framework of the "Restoring Mosul University Library" Project, within the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul Initiative, supported by the Italian agency for Development Cooperation (AICs) and implemented by UNESCO. UNESCO is supporting the Mosul University Library in the implementation of a modern Library Management Information System at the Mosul University Library and provision of the needed equipment and training, including the establishment of a manuscripts and books Restoration, Conservation and Digitalization Unit. The application of this electronic system will facilitate the different functions of Mosul University Library and help learners getting easy access to the valuable learning materials.

## Asmaa's Return to School: A Second Chance at Success

**Dohuk, 15 January 2024** - In the face of adversity, Asmaa Khalaf's remarkable return to school stands as a shining example of how compassionate initiatives can rekindle the flames of hope. Following a two-year hiatus from her school, Asmaa's triumphant comeback was made possible through UNICEF 'Back to Learning' campaign, working hand in hand with the Directorate of Education and funded by the United States Government.

### Asmaa's Challenging Past

Asmaa Khalaf, a 17-year-old Yazidi girl, was born on 25 September 2006, and hails from Tal Ozeer in Sinjar district, Ninewa governorate, Iraq. Her life took a significant turn in 2014 when her family was forced to flee their hometown due to an ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) attack. They sought refuge in the harsh mountains, fighting for survival for eight grueling days. Ultimately, they found shelter in the Bajed Kandala camp in Dohuk governorate, where they have been living ever since. Asmaa has two older siblings: a brother who completed his accounting college studies, and a sister currently studying nursing at a university in Zakho district. She also has two younger siblings in grades 8 and 5.

Asmaa shares how eight families that she knew were captured by ISIL, including her father's uncle and his son. These two families were very close, and Asmaa and her cousin had a strong bond. They shared food and dreams, but those dreams were abruptly cut



short when the families disappeared, leaving their loved ones in uncertainty. A Turning Point: The 'Back to Learning' Initiative

Two years ago, Asmaa was in Grade 9; she was doing well without failing any year. Despite her success, she had no genuine enthusiasm for school and contemplated quitting. "I didn't find school enjoyable, and the idea of going there often gave me headaches, which further dampened my motivation. Additionally, the financial situation at home was not encouraging me to attend school and incur extra expenses," she says openly. Furthermore, the distressing events that her family endured, and the loss of her relatives, also profoundly affected her motivation to study. Despite her mom's encouragement, she dropped out of school for two years.

During that time, community members,

including some of her teachers, tried to persuade her to return to school, but she had a strong aversion to it. "For me, it was nonsense, and it wouldn't change my mind," she says.

Ali, from the Directorate of Education in Dohuk governorate, visited their home and engaged in conversations with her. He emphasized how important education could be for her, how it could benefit her life in numerous ways, making it easier and providing opportunities for employment and financial independence, as part of the 'Back to Learning' program, which is designed to reach out to young individuals like Asmaa who had stepped away from the classroom due to various obstacles.

After hearing what Ali and the teachers had to say, and thanks to her newfound dream of joining security forces, she warmed up to the idea of going back.

## Asmaa's Return to School: A Second Chance at Success *(continued)*

Her admiration for the service they provide to protect people from violence, especially children and women, convinced her to return to school.

This initiative not only gave Asmaa the invaluable opportunity to continue her education but also offered her a sense of optimism, a fresh start, and renewed hope for the future.

Shamo Qasim, the school manager at Bajed Kandala, was very happy to hear that Asmaa had returned to school and pursues her dreams. "I would like to urge all parents in our community to wholeheartedly support their children in completing their studies. Remember, the impact of education goes beyond the individual; it enriches not only families

but also the entire community," he says.

Note: In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals mentioned in this story, some of the names have been altered.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF

## Children pursuing their dreams by being part of the Back to Learning programme

**Baghdad, 15 January 2024** - Meet Sila, a resilient girl living in a refugee camp in Duhok. Despite the challenges she faced, Sila found school as a place to grow and be happy. "Now, I'm so happy. I love my teachers and friends." Sila's family is her biggest supporter. "With my family's support, I will finish school and become the best doctor, helping everyone," added Sila.

On the wall of her tiny home hangs her dream poster, "The Best Doctor in the Region," reminding Sila of her aspirations.

UNICEF with funding from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration supported Sila in pursuing her dream by being part of the Back to Learning programme, inspiring her community to reach their full potential.

#ForEveryChild, education.



## UNDP: Building No. 4 of the College of Basic Education completely rehabilitated, thanks to a generous contribution from Sweden

**Anbar, 18 January 2024** - Big News from Haditha - Anbar University! Building No. 4 of the College of Basic Education has been completely rehabilitated, thanks to a generous contribution from Sweden!

The old, small building underwent extensive damage but has now been expanded to accommodate more students from various regions of western Anbar. It's now one of the most important projects in the region!

Maryam Shukri, a first-year at the college of Science, shares her excitement: "Today, I feel comfortable with the building's expansion and increased capacity."

Muhammad Nafi, a first-year at the college of Science, expressed joy at the modern, spacious new building, that has now become an attraction.

Over 1,200 Students from different places in western Anbar benefit from this building, contributing to regional stabilization and revitalization.





Baghdad, 17 January 2024 - Great meeting between UNESCO Representative to Iraq, **Paolo Fontani**, and Finnish Ambassador, **Anu Saarela**. Engaged in insightful discussions on UNESCO's current projects and priorities in culture and education, including the Initiative to #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul.



Baghdad, 31 January 2024 - UNESCO Iraq's Chief of Education, **Santosh Khatri**, welcomed the **delegation of the University of Diyala** to the UNESCO Office in Baghdad. Discussions included UNESCO's support in Iraq and explored potential future cooperation including setting-up of UNESCO Chair at the University.

## Aya's resilience: from loss to learning

**Ninewa, 28 January 2024** - Aya, a resilient 14-year-old from Omar Mandan village in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq, has faced numerous challenges due to the conflict with ISIS. Together with her four sisters and one brother, she faced the heart-wrenching loss of her father, a situation she described as "the most difficult time in my life."

She started going to school at the age of 7, but ongoing conflict in her neighborhood disrupted her studies for several years. However, 2023 marked a turning point, thanks to the Accelerated Learning Programme provided by UNICEF and funded by the Government of Japan. Aya is now back in school, making up for lost time by concurrently studying the first and second grades in a single year—covering the first-grade curriculum in the first semester and the second-grade curriculum in the second semester.

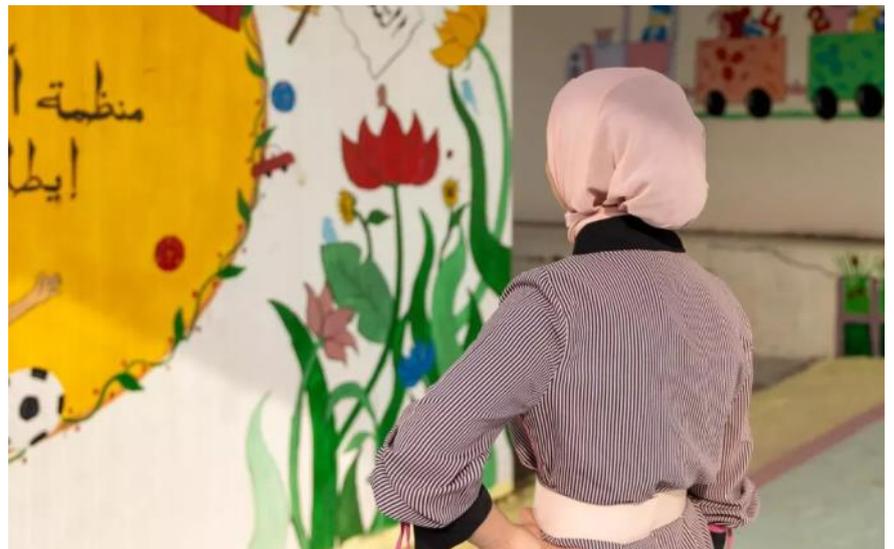
Currently residing at her uncle's home to participate in Accelerated Learning Programme, Aya suffers from being separated from her mother and siblings. "Living apart from my mother and

siblings is quite challenging. I miss being with them," she says.

Despite challenges, Aya remains determined to achieve her dream of completing her studies. "My goal is to

complete my education and become a doctor, particularly a surgeon," she says. "My advice to others is to keep studying because it's very important."

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF



## A 3-day seminar was conducted on the key features of Competency-Based Training (CBT) approaches of the ILO

**Erbil, 28 January 2024** - Under the Memorandum of Understanding between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Erbil Polytechnic University aiming to build the capacities of the University's staff in delivering high quality education and vocational training that match the learning outcomes with the labour market needs, a 3-day seminar was conducted on the key features of Competency-Based Training (CBT) approaches of the ILO. The

participants from EPU Tourism Institutes at Koya, Shaklawa, and Erbil developed key recommendations at the end of the seminar towards improving the skills development efforts in the Tourism sector at Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and shall take these recommendations for further discussions and development in the coming period.



## With funding from the Government of Japan, UNICEF takes proactive measures to support Iraqi children returning from northeast Syria

**Baghdad, 01 February 2024** - With funding from the Government of Japan, UNICEF takes proactive measures to support Iraqi children returning from northeast Syria. In Ninewa, the Al-Jadaa-1 rehab center has introduced specialized courses for teachers in psychosocial support and classroom management. These courses play a vital role in helping children reintegrate by fostering shared experiences, providing inspiration, and offering crucial support. Education #ForEveryChild.



## Coordinating efforts for education: insights from Iraq's TVET CG



**Baghdad, 11 February 2024** - UNESCO recently led the 4th meeting of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Coordination Group (TVET CG) at the Ministry of

Higher Education and Scientific Research. Chaired by Dr. Hamid Khalaf, Prime Minister's Advisor/Executive Director of the Higher Committee for Education

Development, the session included representatives from various sectors.

The focus was on coordinating ongoing initiatives in Iraq for the development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems. Discussions covered the role of the newly formed Ministerial Coordination Committee for Education, progress on the Draft TVET Law, and future TVET priorities.

During the meeting, there was a shared commitment to push for the ratification of the Draft TVET Law by the Iraqi Government. Additionally, UNESCO presented a mapping exercise on TVET project activities, aligning them with the New Iraq National Education Strategy. The gathering served as a dynamic platform to collaboratively shape the future of education in Iraq.

## The Back to Learning campaign builds a brighter future for the children



**Erbil, 15 February 2024** – Ruzhda is a 14-year-old Syrian refugee girl who has fled Syria with her family and settled in Qushtapa refugee camp in

Erbil, Iraq, 10 years ago. She was only two years old when she was displaced and has spent most of her life in the camp.

Ruzhda attended school until last year in Grade 4 when she started struggling and feeling overwhelmed with learning, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic which prevented her and her fellow classmates from attending school. Ruzhda felt it was challenging for her to learn and proceed with her education in such circumstances. As a result, she dropped out of school.

“I used to attend school and I had many friends. After I dropped out of school, I felt that my dreams were shattered,” Ruzhda says.

UNICEF's Back-to-Learning Campaign through the General Directorate of Education (DoE) in Erbil provides children with a second chance to continue their education.

## The Back to Learning campaign builds a brighter future for the children *(continued)*

In the new academic year 2023-2024, the DoE team visited Ruzhda and her mother. They collected detailed information on her educational status and guided them through the process of returning to school. Ruzhda agreed immediately. The DoE team supported her with the re-enrollment process.

Ruzhda prepared her bag and uniform the night before out of excitement.

"I felt like I was reborn. The path to a brighter future is open for me now," Ruzhda says. "I still remember the first day I returned to school, the first walk from the house to the school, and the first class which was the English language. It is all in my head like a dream come true," she adds.

On the first day back, Ruzhda walked to school, feeling excitement and joy.

"I was very happy to return to my



school, see my friends, study my favorite subjects and interact with my teachers," she says.

Ruzhda was determined to never interrupt her studies again and to fulfill her dream of becoming a doctor to help others. She is now a committed

student who studies hard and loves learning.

"UNICEF and the Directorate of Education are implementing the Back-to-Learning campaign every year to ensure that children like Ruzhda continue their education, live their childhood, and fulfill their dreams," says Mr. Sardar, the school principal in Qushtapa refugee camp.

Ruzhda now looks forward to going to school every day and is grateful for the opportunity to fulfill her aspirations. She is determined to make the most of her education and to build a brighter future for herself.

With funding from the Government of Germany through KfW Development Bank, UNICEF and the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Education implemented the Back-to-Learning campaign in 2023 identifying more than 35,000 out-of-school children and successfully re-enrolling over 12,000 children, including refugees, in the formal education system.



## ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq visits the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (DOLSA) and Vocational Training Center in Basra

**Basra, 19 February 2024** - Dr. Maha Kattaa, the ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, embarked on a fruitful visit to the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (DOLSA) and Vocational Training Center in Basra.

During her visit, she personally toured six current vocational training workshops which are implementing by the ILO, each focusing on essential skills such as solar system installation, internal decoration, welding, AC maintenance, electricity, and the art of wall decoration. There were meaningful conversations with the talented male and female about the training, its impact on their career path, and their future steps after the training.

The ILO, in collaboration with UN-

Habitat Iraq is implementing training programmes under European Union in Iraq funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra

City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis" to support youth in their journey to better employment opportunities, including self-employment.



## E-learning platform E-Rahenan launched in Erbil



**Erbil, 25 February 2024** - "Education is an investment not only in children's futures, but in Iraq's future economic productivity, poverty reduction, social cohesion, sustainability and more," said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF

Representative in Iraq today during the launch of the E-learning platform E-Rahenan in Erbil by the KRI Ministry of Education. UNICEF remains committed in supporting KRG's efforts to improve the

quality of education through the utilization of technology to foster skills development #ForEveryChild and teacher. #ForEveryChild, education



## UNESCO marks International Day of Education

**Baghdad, 24 January 2024** - On the occasion of 2024 International Day of Education, UNESCO re-iterates its commitment to enhance access to quality education for all learners in Iraq and support teachers to strengthen the foundations of peaceful and inclusive societies. UNESCO Iraq thanks the Teachers, Students, Parents, Government of Iraq, MoE, MoHESR, MoLSA, MoP, PMAC, all the Members of the Iraq Civil Society Education Forum, and the development partners EU, KOICA, Japan, Canada, AICS, GIZ, UN in Iraq and UNICEF for partnerships and support to Education and Training in Iraq.



### Timeline

## DSRSG for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance signs the condolences book at the Iranian embassy in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 06 January 2024** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone: "On behalf of the United Nations in Iraq, signing the condolences book today at the Iranian embassy in Baghdad for the victims of the terrorist attack in Kerman".



## UNAMI on X

**Baghdad, 19 January 2024** - Congratulations to Iraq's national football team on their continued winning streak!

# UNESCO Iraq Office celebrates the International Mother Language Day!

Baghdad, 21 February 2024 - UNESCO believes in the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity for sustainable societies. It is within its mandate for peace that it works to preserve the differences in cultures and languages that foster tolerance and respect for others. Multilingual and multicultural societies exist through their languages which transmit and preserve traditional knowledge and cultures in a sustainable way.



## UNAMI marks International Mother Language Day



Baghdad, 21 February 2024 - Home to numerous civilizations over millennia, Mesopotamia witnessed the linguistic richness of the people who inhabited the area, too. This continues to be reflected in modern-day Iraq, mirroring a profound cultural heritage that has survived the test of time. Generally, language is like a living creature. It grows and develops according to the development and growth of society. This means that language does not stay the same, but grows due to

developments, science, research and discoveries. Language is not only the combination of words and letters that form grammatical sentences. That accounts only for 40-50% of language. Meanwhile, the rest that is responsible for the formation and configuration of the character of the language, and thus, the characters of the country and the people speaking and using this language, depends on the sound. Sound, intonation and waves. Therefore, each language has its own



character and its own unique intonation. The history of languages actually extends to 7000 and 6000 years which means 4000 years BC. Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/5xtu52th> Video produced by the Strategic Communications and Public Information Office and the Translation and Interpretation Unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

