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SRSB and Head of UNAMI Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan: “We are firmly committed to supporting Iraq's priorities, which are at the heart of our work in UNAMI and the United Nations as a whole.”



Najaf, 04 November 2024 – Remarks to the press by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, following his meeting with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani in Najaf:

“I had the honour, at the outset of assuming my duties as the United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary-General in Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), to meet with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani. During this visit, which is my first to the holy city of Najaf, I listened to the wisdom of His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani and his vision regarding the situation in Iraq and the region.

You all know the high regard and inestimable respect that His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani enjoys in the hearts of everyone, not only in Iraq, but in the Islamic world and the entire world.

I am extremely grateful to His Eminence for this meeting. I gained much guidance, advice and perspectives, aimed at protecting and elevating the well-being of human beings and preserving their dignity wherever they are.

From my side, I conveyed the greetings of the Secretary-General to His Eminence and his wishes for

continued good health, as well as his gratitude to His Eminence for his continued support for the United Nations and its role in assisting Iraq. I agreed with His Eminence to work jointly towards building on Iraq's regional and international standing as a founding Member of the United Nations and a force for security, stability and good neighborliness in the region.

We, in the United Nations, categorically reject any threat to the Marjaiya, in light of the symbolic significance and respect enjoyed in this country and throughout the world.

I expressed my gratitude for the continued support of His Eminence for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) over the last two decades. His advice is highly appreciated by me as it was by all my predecessors and assisted them in defining the support and guidance during some of the most difficult periods in the history of this country.

I stressed to His Eminence that the United Nations will not abandon Iraq and will continue to support the country on its path towards stability, sustainable development and respect for human rights in a way that preserves Iraq's standing. It is true that the role of UNAMI after 21 years has to a great extent been achieved and that UNAMI will cease its operations by the end of 2025, in

accordance with the decision of the Security Council and at the request of the Government of Iraq. However, the UN's presence in and support for Iraq will continue in the interests of this country and its people, through several programs and projects of a developmental, social and technical nature, in order to promote democracy and human rights and ensure respect for all Iraqis. I requested the advice of His Eminence on how to act together to provide the best support and expertise to Iraq in the coming years, to solidify the standing of this country, which contributed to shaping civilization of humankind.

In this context, His Eminence requested me to work closely with the Government of Iraq to achieve the priorities that maintain the stability of Iraq while protecting the rights of the Iraqi people, such that all Iraqis enjoy peace, security, stability and dignity.

His Eminence expects Iraq to strengthen its relations with all its neighbors and the wider international community, and for Iraq to play a pivotal positive role as a peacebuilder and a channel for regional cooperation and collaboration.

Iraq's determination to serve as a force for peace and stability in a region beset by conflict, as well as a player in a world also challenged by conflict, is a goal that is in line with the Secretary-General's efforts to build a more secure, stable and united world.

We are firmly committed to supporting Iraq's priorities, which are at the heart of our work in UNAMI and the United Nations as a whole. We are here to serve this country. We do not interfere in its internal affairs, but we provide advice and technical support at the request of Iraq. We all strive in the service of this wonderful country in maintaining Iraq's security and stability, and the prosperity of the Iraqi people.”

In this edition ...

New Year's greeting message from the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan

Baghdad, 31 December 2024 – “May the peace, blessings, and mercy of God be upon you.

My dear family and loved ones, the sons of Iraq,

As we approach the end of one year and the beginning of another, I extend to you all my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the New Year, wishing you a year of hope for an Iraq full of security, stability and prosperity, a year that brings greater opportunities and a better life for every Iraqi.

I also congratulate the Iraqi people and the Government of Iraq on these achievements made in 2024. We have witnessed practical and tangible steps towards development and improving infrastructure, which reflects the strong will and ambition of the government of Mr. Mohammed Shiaa Al-Sudani to improve the lives of Iraqis. Indeed, there is still great hope for the Iraqis and the Iraqi government to achieve the intended and set goals and objectives, and we have great confidence in the ability of this country, its institutions and the Iraqi people to draw a better future that all the people of Iraq, regardless of their components and affiliations, will be proud of.

In this context, we call on the Iraqi government to continue working with sincerity and team spirit to improve services throughout Iraq according to the best standards and in a way that satisfies the people of this country, stressing the importance of credibility and integrity and drawing a better future.

We also hope to solve the problem of internally displaced persons and end their suffering in accordance with international standards and regulations, while providing the necessary support for their safe return and dignified reintegration into their communities.

I have no doubt in Iraq's ability to overcome challenges and restore this ancient country's regional and international standing and move forward with steady and confident steps to meet the legitimate aspirations and ambitions of all the people of Iraq.

I conclude this message by extending my warmest congratulations and blessings to you on the occasion of the New Year, and at the same time emphasizing the role of the United Nations in supporting you, the people and youth of Iraq, the people of Iraq, and the government of Iraq in all that you aspire to towards a prosperous future.

Greetings to you and a happy new year to everyone.”



16 Days of Activism: Iraq reaffirms commitment to women's safety and empowerment

Baghdad, 03 December 2024 – As part of the global 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls, a national event was held in Baghdad, under the theme: “Caring for Women: A Path to a Prosperous Society.” Organized by the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, UN Women, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the event reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to addressing violence and empowering women as integral to national stability and development.

More on page 16.

UN Iraq Special Representative commends population census in Iraq

Baghdad, 20 November 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, commended today the conduct of the first population census in Iraq in 37 years, stressing its importance for future development plans and projects in the country. .

More on page 78.

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

SRSG Al Hassan: “As we proceed with UNAMI's transition, I stress the readiness of UNAMI and the UN to assist Iraq in its endeavors to build a secure and prosperous Iraq.”

New York, 06 December 2024 - At its 9803rd meeting, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, at this meeting:

“Excellency, President of the Security Council, Robert Wood

Distinguished members of the Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to present this briefing, which is the first before your esteemed Council, since I assumed the position of Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. I would like to thank and appreciate all of you, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait for the confidence granted, for which I hope to be worthy.

I will start by saying, as you have heard many times by now, today's Iraq is not the same as the Iraq of twenty years ago, or even five years ago. Despite the many obstacles, Iraq today is more secure, stable and open. I am confident that this country, deeply rooted in history and the cradle of human civilization, is capable of overcoming crises and facing challenges towards forging a more secure, bright and hopeful future.

Since the last briefing presented before your esteemed Council in May by my colleague Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who I would like to commend for all her sincere efforts, there have been a number of positive developments, some of which I had the opportunity to witness myself, the most prominent of which are as follows:

A major milestone was the successful conduct of the national census on 20 November of this year, which I had the opportunity to watch together with the Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. This was the first nationwide, comprehensive census to include the Kurdistan Region since 1987. Preliminary results indicate that Iraq's population has almost doubled in just over three



decades, reaching more than 45 million people. Decision makers will now be able to plan based on reliable facts and figures.

Dear Colleagues,

Another key development, after a year of vacancy and various unsuccessful attempts, was the election of a new Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq on 31st October. An important step taken to foster parliamentary dialogue on legislations, which was urgently needed to address the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

Committed to improve services, PM of Iraq Al-Sudani continues to invest heavily in major infrastructure projects throughout Iraq. These include constructions and development of roads, bridges, schools and transportation networks, which are geared at improving services and creating opportunities and improving the lives of the Iraqi people.

In a region that is “on fire”, Iraq's Government has shown strong resolve to keep the country out of the widening regional conflicts, while standing firm as a strong voice for regional peace and stability. PM of Iraq Al-Sudani has consistently called for an end to regional tensions, stressing the need for respect of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Looking beyond the current conflicts, the Government of Iraq is also striving to position itself as a vital corridor for transportation, energy, and trade, leveraging regional partnerships. Such initiatives underscore Iraq's efforts to foster regional integration and prosperity. Positive progress was also made in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. After two years of protracted negotiations

and delays, parliamentary elections took place in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, thus re-establishing the legitimacy of the Region's institutions. On 20 October I witnessed first-hand in Erbil and Dohuk, well organized and smooth voting operations in some of the more than 7,000 polling stations.

With more than two million people casting their votes, voters' turnout reached 72%, an increase of 12% over the previous elections. UNAMI's electoral assistance has been widely recognized by regional and federal authorities, including the Independent High Electoral Commission; a support which was instrumental in instilling trust and strengthening Iraq's technical capacities for elections. Something the United Nations should be very proud of. I take this opportunity to congratulate Iraq, the United Nations, and the UNAMI electoral staff for the dedicated efforts.

Important to note also, that out of the 100 parliamentary seats, women managed to secure 31 seats, which is more than the minimum quota of 30%. As negotiations among political parties for the formation of the new regional government in Kurdistan are underway, political parties have a responsibility to enable women's access to political positions and a seat at the table for them.

Meanwhile, the visit of the PM of Iraq Al-Sudani to Erbil following the elections was an important step towards promoting joint dialogue to address the many important issues between the two sides.

Mr. President,

Dear colleagues,

These are all positive developments but tempered by the threat posed by persistent and systemic corruption despite the government's efforts to address them. While public debate on

SRSg Al Hassan: “As we proceed with UNAMI's transition, I stress the readiness of UNAMI and the UN to assist Iraq ... (continued)

corruption is frequent in Iraq, and politicians engage widely on the topic, the issue continues to prevail in Iraq's socio-economic life. The country does require comprehensive changes and reforms that will bolster accountability, promote competency, improve transparency, and fortify governance systems. I fully trust that the government is taking promising steps in this direction.

And while strengthening state institutions to tackle corruption is crucial, bolstering state institutions, promoting and supporting human rights are all the more important in a country that is moving away from its dark past. It requires strong institutions that safeguard the people's fundamental rights and freedoms.

Considering the critical role of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights - Iraq's constitutionally mandated national human rights institution - the selection of a new Board of Commissioners, regrettably is still pending.

Iraq's constructive engagement with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in August was a positive step. What is important now is for Iraq to implement the Committee's recommendations, a critical step to strengthen the protection of Iraq's rich diversity. I am truly confident and a strong believer in Iraq's ability to do so.

Mr. President,

Dear colleagues,

An issue that has generated a lot of public debate and international attentions are the proposed amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law. This is a significant undertaking that could have far-reaching implications for women and children. We have extensively engaged with Iraqi stakeholders,

emphasizing the need for a constructive and inclusive dialogue on this issue; we further stressed that any reforms to the Personal Status Law should be in alignment with Iraq's international human rights commitments and obligations, and I'm confident, also, in the Iraq's ability to do so.

In a country seeking to heal from internal conflicts and terrorism, at the heart of the matter lies the crucial question of justice and accountability. Amendments to the general amnesty law are currently being debated in the Council of Representatives of Iraq. Provisions for amnesty can be a pathway to promote reconciliation and redress the grievances of those unjustly imprisoned. To be clear, those responsible for the atrocities should be brought to justice. At the same time, justice should be delivered in a fair and proportionate manner.

The impact of Da'esh, Mr. President and dear colleagues, in Iraq is unfortunately still visible in the camps hosting thousands of displaced persons, the majority of whom are Yazidis. I have myself witnessed first-hand the harsh living conditions which those people continue to endure and live through. This is unacceptable. It is unacceptable for Iraq, Iraq can do better, Iraq is capable of treating its citizens and its people in a better environment. I am fully certain that Iraq will be able to provide better living conditions for those who are victims in the first place. My heart and solidarity go to the Yazidis and others who are displaced for so many years. They deserve better.

The Prime Minister's decision to establish a National High Committee, in consultation with the United Nations, to tackle the issue of

displacement is a step in the right direction. It is, however, not enough. The state needs to invest concretely in creating the conditions for the return of displaced; Yazidis and others. Four years after its signature, the Sinjar agreement has yet to be fully implemented. As said before, a unified administration in Sinjar and stable security structures are the only way to create conducive conditions for the returnees.

And let us not forget that the Iraqi citizens still in Al Hol Camp in northeast Syria. Iraq is but one of the very few countries exerting commendable efforts for the repatriation of their own citizens. I saw for myself the support provided by the Government of Iraq, UN agencies and partners, to the thousands of people who are returning to Iraq, a safe Iraq, after a prolonged period of displacement and suffering. More though needs to be done to accelerate the return of the people from the hell-like conditions in Al Hol. We have renewed commitment from the Iraqi government and institutions to repatriate Iraqi citizens from Al Hol and other camps in Northeast Syria, hopefully before end of 2025.

That said, any other country with nationals in Al Hol bears the same duty to act and take back their citizens.

Mr. President, Robert,

Distinguished colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen

Since assuming my post, my colleagues and I have been striving to build trust and strengthen bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Therefore, we have encouraged the resumption of negotiations and communications between the two brotherly neighbors on the demarcation of the maritime border beyond marker 162. We also expressed willingness of UNAMI and the entire UN to provide their services should both sides choose to avail themselves.

On the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, UNAMI has continued to participate as observer in the work of the Tripartite mechanism chaired by the ICRC. After more than three decades, there is clearly a need for more sincere efforts to identify and excavate potential burial sites, according to agreed mechanisms. This is the main demand of the families of the missing persons who are awaiting to know the fate of their loved ones, an issue of paramount importance to the leadership, government and people of Kuwait. We hope to see a real and



SRSB Al Hassan: “As we proceed with UNAMI's transition, I stress the readiness of UNAMI and the UN to assist Iraq ... (continued)

tangible effort on that file by those concerned. We call for expediting the search for, and return of, missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, in order to close that chapter, allowing the two neighbors to move to cooperation. It is necessary here to refer to the decision of the Iraqi Federal Court issued in 2023, which was extremely unfortunate and seriously damaged the Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. In this context, I would like to refer to the fact that we are working closely with the competent, responsible and concerned entities in Iraq to regain the trust between Iraq and Kuwait. We hope that those concerned in Iraq will be able, as soon as possible, to correct the path in an ideal manner that is worthy of the ties that bind the two brotherly countries.

A few last words on UNAMI's transition and liquidation plan as requested by resolution 2732(2024). While UNAMI continues to ensure the delivery of its mandate, we are working closely with the Government of Iraq, the UN country team and UN Headquarters to finalize the plan for submission to this august Council by 31 December 2024.

Together with the UN country team, the Mission is also taking steps to enable the transfer of relevant tasks into the forthcoming Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Iraq.

I take this opportunity to stress to this Council the importance of allocating UNAMI's full budget for 2025. This is too crucial in order to enable the Mission to deliver its mandate and carry out its transition and drawdown process as smoothly as possible and according to the time frame set out by resolution 2732.

In conclusion, Mister President, and I am sorry If I have talked at length, I would like to point out that I have no doubt that the leaders of Iraq are fully aware of the challenges facing their country and the steps they must take to distance their country from any dangers or harm, a country deeply rooted in history and pivotal in the Middle East, in a manner that establishes a new phase focused on the future and thus restoring to Iraq its positive and pivotal role in the region and the world.

We should not forget that this country is one of the founding members of the United Nations.

I would like to mention here the principles that came out of my meeting with his Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (may God grant him long life and health) in Najaf on 4 November. They are:

competence and integrity in assuming public office in Iraq.

Neighborly relations and preventing foreign interference.

upholding the rule of law

restricting arms to state control

Fighting corruption at all levels

These points and principles have been widely welcomed by Iraqi political actors as a "road map" for the country.

As we proceed with UNAMI's transition, I stress the readiness of UNAMI and the UN to assist Iraq in its endeavors to build a secure and prosperous Iraq. I would like to express my pleasure for working with the Iraqi government and His Excellency the Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in the remaining time of the mission. This mission whose employees sacrificed everything precious and their lives to help Iraq.

Thank you and I beg your pardon for talking at length.

Thank you.”

Social Cohesion

Celebrating the success of the community leaders training!

Baghdad, 01 December 2024 - UNDP is celebrating the success of training university professors, police, and Women Empowerment representatives from Ninewa, who successfully completed the Community Leaders Training. This initiative is a transformative tool for addressing community challenges and guiding society using modern principles and standards.

This Training has equipped these leaders with powerful tools and set the stage for transformational change in their communities, paving the way for a stronger and more prosperous future.

This project is implemented through the UNDP Building Resilience Through Employment Promotion programme, with generous support from the Government of Germany, this initiative aims to strengthen leadership skills and empower

communities in areas liberated, fostering healthier and more peaceful societies.

Let's celebrate their success and look forward to the positive impact they'll bring to their communities!



UNDP and partners strategize on strengthening women's leadership

Baghdad, 24 November 2024 –

Twenty four women peacebuilders from diverse faith backgrounds across Iraq came together to strategize on strengthening women's leadership in promoting social cohesion, acceptance, and coexistence among different faiths in Iraq.

This initiative was implemented by UNDP's Social Cohesion Pillar with the generous support of the Government of Denmark.



SRSF for Iraq and Head of UNAMI Dr. Al Hassan meets the Marjaiya

Najaf, 12 December 2024 – Here is the text of the statement to the press by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan:

“Our visit to Najaf to meet the Marjaiya, represented by His Eminence Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani, is part of on-going and continuous engagement between the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and relevant stakeholders and actors in Iraq.

You are all aware of the high regard and respect that His Eminence Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani enjoys in the hearts of everyone, including the United Nations, and how deeply he cares about Iraq, its stability and distancing it from any tensions that could harm the country. This is in addition to his vision that he explained during our first meeting on the future of Iraq, encapsulated in the principles set out in the statement that was issued at the time. I informed His Eminence Sayyid Mohammed Rida Al-Sistani of the meetings conducted in the United Nations headquarters in New York and the deliberations held with the different members of the international community there.

You are also aware that the situation in the region is critical, changes are fast-paced and the challenges are significant. The UN and its Secretary-General, whom I represent in this country, is striving to keep Iraq safe and out of harm's way, away from crises or political tensions, in order to maintain the hard-won gains the country has achieved for its security and the stability that Iraq has recently been enjoying.

Today, we also discussed with the Marjaiya, here in Najaf, the means, measures and steps to distance Iraq from any negative developments that



do not serve the security, stability and future of Iraq. Let me be very frank, the situation in the region is difficult, fluid and fast paced. However, we have great confidence in the wisdom and ability of the leadership in Iraq to overcome the challenges of this period. There is direct co-ordination between UNAMI and the political leadership of Iraq, in particular His Excellency Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. From the city of Najaf, we call on all political forces and groups in Iraq to put the interest of this country first, stressing that the security of Iraq and the Iraqi people is sacrosanct. The overarching goal is to maintain the security and stability of Iraq for all.

I am full of hope and confidence in the ability of this country and the entities and actors in Iraq to face these challenges, give priority to the paramount interests, exercise wisdom and pursue efforts to chart a bright, hopeful future for all the people of this country, from all different affiliations. Iraq is in dire need of efforts at a thorough and accelerated pace to dispose of the legacies of the painful past, which requires bold and speedy decision-making. As we say, the sooner the better. We encourage the decision makers in this country to take the

necessary, long-awaited decisions for reconciliation in this country.

God willing, we will see and hear good news in the coming days, to strengthen, foster and consolidate the security and stability of this country and contribute to the development and improvement if its relations with neighboring, regional and international countries.

Iraq should not be an arena for score-settling. This country has a trajectory of civilization to regain the stature it deserves.

I discussed with His Eminence Sayyid Mohammed Rida the importance and necessity of providing the requisite guarantees to all groups in Syria, the need to avoid any acts of retaliation against anyone, security for all Syrians and accountability through independent and transparent judicial processes. All Syrians must be protected.

We also stressed that Iraq is not to be used as an arena for settling scores on account of any external foreign actors. This is our message today with the Marjaiya. We thank His Excellency, the Governor, for his hospitality and generosity. We hope that this country focuses on its interests and gains. We have full confidence in this government and in the leaders of this country.”

Putting Iraq's interests at the forefront in the face of challenges



Baghdad, 29 December 2024 – Here is the text of the statement for the media by Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI Baghdad, made at the Abo Hanifa Holy Shrine:

“May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon you.

Today, we were honored first by visiting the shrine of Imam Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man, by whose pure soil the city of Baghdad was honored. Imam Abu Hanifa is followed by more than a billion Muslims around the world. Second, I was honored by meeting a group of distinguished sheikhs from the Fiqh Council of Senior Scholars to Preaching and Iftaa'(Verdicts), in whom I sensed wisdom and benevolence, and a deep sense of belonging and concern for this dear country, and for its past, present and future. This visit was an opportunity to

discuss with their eminences and sheikhs the pressing issues facing Iraq and the region at this sensitive stage, and I conveyed to them the greetings of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his wishes for their success and progress.

At the beginning of my speech, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Fiqh Council for the warm reception with which I was met, which reflects the strength of the relationship between the United Nations and religious institutions in Iraq, a relationship that has always been based on cooperation to enhance security, peace and stability for Iraq.

During the meeting, we discussed the current situation in Iraq and the region, and I stressed the importance of dealing with matters wisely and calmly, putting Iraq's interests at the forefront in the face of challenges that may undermine Iraq's advancement

and prosperity. We touched upon the multiple crises that affect stability in Iraq, whether in terms of security, political or social challenges, in addition to the tensions in the region that require continuous coordination between countries and regional and international institutions.

We also discussed the situation in Gaza and the difficult humanitarian conditions experienced by the Palestinian people, and I explained to them the position of the United Nations and its Secretary-General, which is to seek to end the conflict in Gaza and stop the fighting immediately, as the world cannot stand idly in the face of this human suffering. We all hope that the international and regional efforts will bear fruit in ending this tragic conflict quickly and permanently.

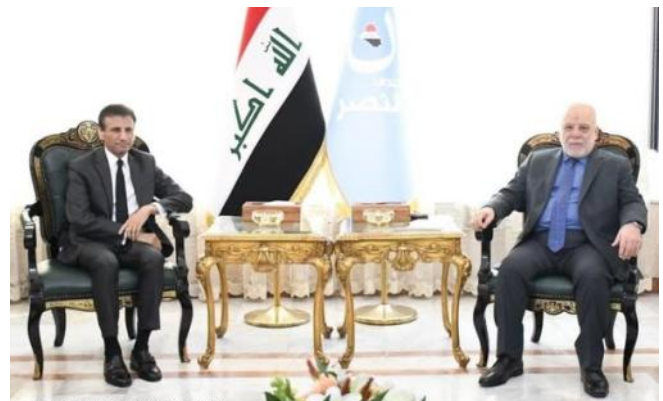
The United Nations continues to stand by Iraq and affirms its commitment to continue supporting the Iraqi people in their quest for stability and prosperity. There is no doubt that this fruitful cooperation with the Fiqh Council will remain an essential element in achieving the goals of peace and stability in Iraq and the region.”



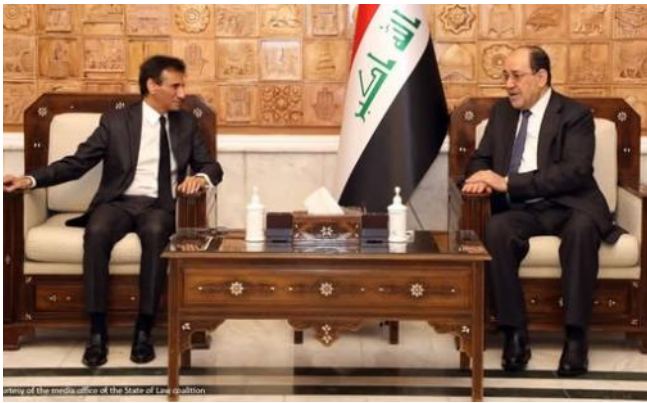
Political Consultations



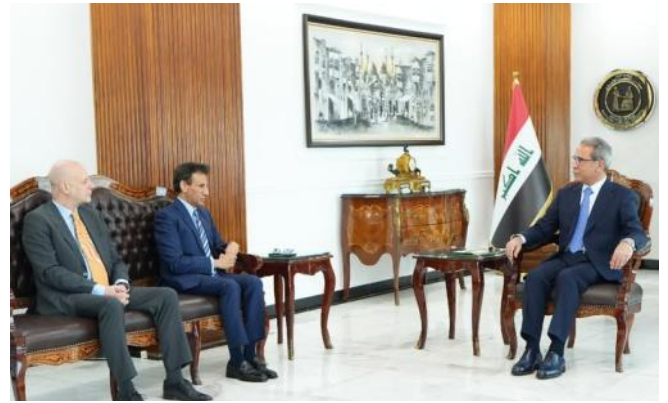
Baghdad, 5 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with Iraqi Prime Minister **Mr. Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region.



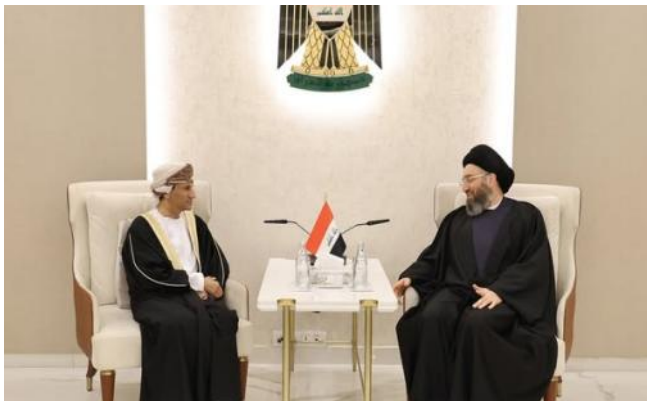
Baghdad, 5 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with Head of the Al Nasr Coalition, **Dr. Haider al-Abadi**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region.



Baghdad, 5 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with Head of the State of Law coalition, **Mr. Nouri al-Maliki**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region.



Baghdad, 6 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met with Head of the Supreme Judicial Council **Judge Faiq Zaidan**. They discussed avenues of cooperation between the United Nations and Iraq on judicial matters.



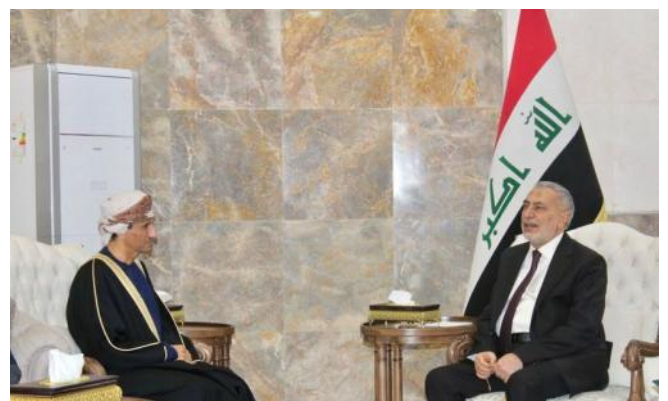
Baghdad, 7 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the Head of the Al-Hikma National Movement, **Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region.



Baghdad, 7 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with Head of the Taqaddum Party, **Mr. Muhammad Al-Halbousi**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region.



Baghdad, 7 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met with **Mr. Adil Abdul-Mahdi**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region.



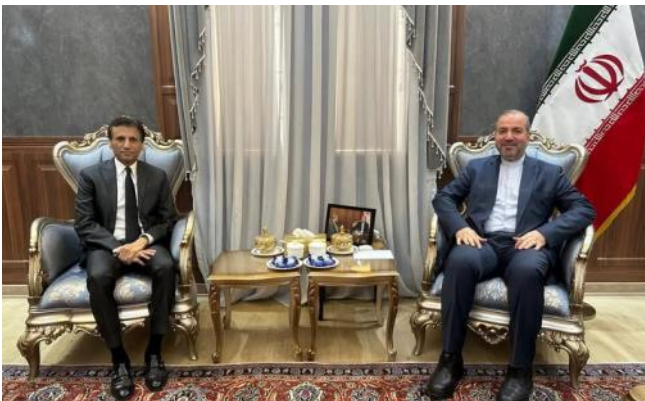
Baghdad, 8 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, **Dr. Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani**. He congratulated him on his election, wishing him success in his duties. They also discussed matters related to the legislative work in the forthcoming period, emphasizing the priorities that directly serve the interests of Iraq and are in line with the legitimate aspirations of the Iraqi people.



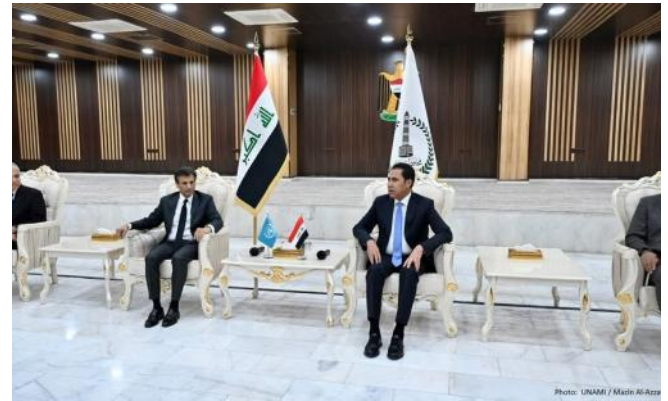
Riyadh, KSA, 10 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), His Excellency **Mr. Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi**, at GCC Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They discussed the latest developments in the region and topics of mutual interest as well as means to enhance cooperation for the benefit of Iraq and the region. During the meeting, the GCC affirmed its support for the ongoing efforts to consolidate security and stability in Iraq, and commended UNAMI for its support to Iraq in achieving the country's priorities. Photos courtesy of the GCC Media Office.



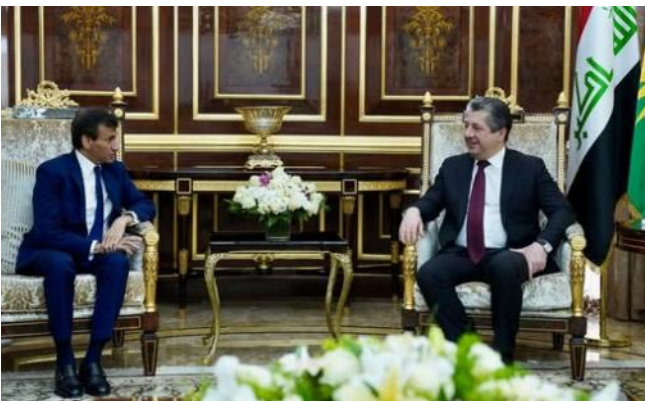
Baghdad, 14 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, **Mr. Muhsin Al-Mandalawi**. They discussed ways to support stability, development and reform efforts, maintain the gains achieved in relation to personal status matters, and move forward to a future of reconciliation among all groups and components of the Iraqi people.



Baghdad, 16 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with His Excellency **Ambassador Mohammad Kazem Al-Sadik**, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq. During the meeting, the gains achieved in Iraq were praised. Also discussed were the ways to enhance those gains in the interest of the Iraqi people and to keep Iraq away from any regional tensions that may affect its security and stability as well as the stability of the region.



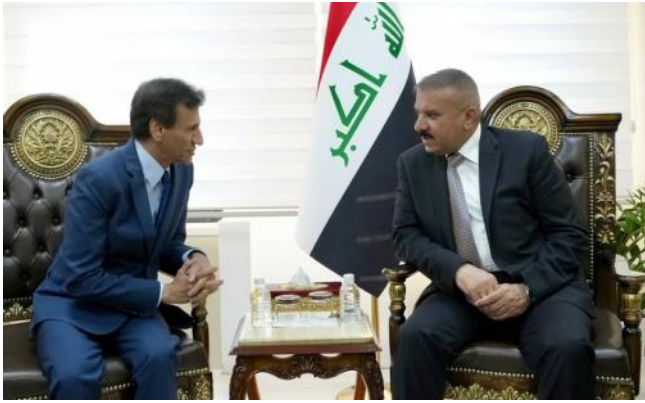
Mosul, 17 November 2024 - Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with Ninewa Governor **Abdul Qader al-Dakheel**. They discussed reconstruction efforts, IDP returns, and Ninewa's development priorities. The United Nations is committed to supporting Iraq in its efforts to enhance development and build a bright future for all its people.



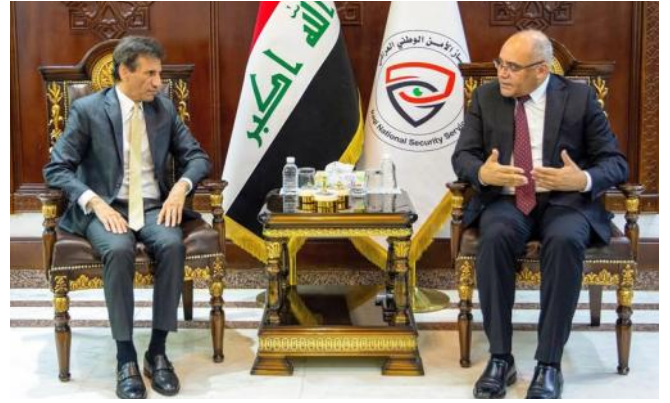
Erbil, 18 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, **Mr. Masrour Barzani**, in the Salaheddin resort. They discussed the general situation in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.



Baghdad, 19 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan** met today with National Security Adviser **Qasim Al-Araji**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and the region and other issues, including the repatriation of Iraqis from the Al-Hol camp and other matters of mutual interest and strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and its agencies and Iraq.



Baghdad, 19 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met with the Iraqi Minister of Interior, **Mr. Abdul-Amir Al-Shammari**. They discussed the situation in Iraq and cooperation between the United Nations and the Ministry of Interior as well as issues of mutual interest.



Baghdad, 21 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the Head of the Iraqi National Security Service, **Mr. Abdul-Karim Al-Basri**. They discussed the general situation in Iraq and issues of mutual interest including the return of Iraqis from the al-Hol camp.



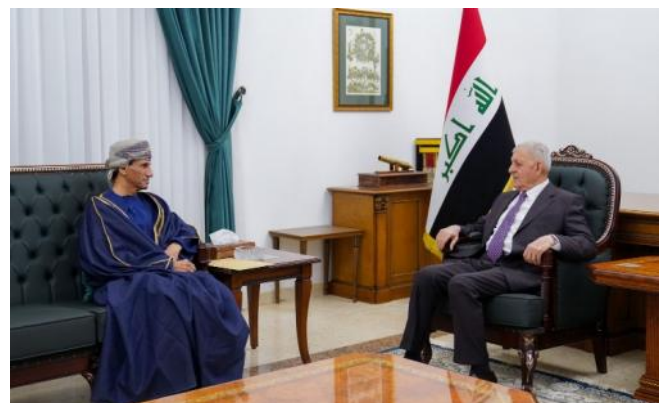
Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Dr. Fuad Hussein**. In their meeting, they discussed the situation in Iraq, including Dr. Al Hassan's recent briefing to the United Nations Security Council, as well as developments in the region.



Najaf, 12 December 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited today the **Bahr Al-Uloom Foundation** in Najaf, where he was informed about their research and academic activities.



Baghdad, 14 December 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al-Hassan**, met in Baghdad with the former member of the Council of Representatives and Secretary of the Political Bureau of the National Wisdom Movement, **Ms. Layla Alkhafaji**. They discussed the current political situation in the country.



Baghdad, 15 December 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, was received today in Baghdad by the President of the Republic of Iraq, **H.E. Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid**. They discussed the current political situation in the country and the region, with particular focus on developments in Syria. Dr. Al Hassan reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to preserving Iraq's security and development gains while striving for even greater progress. Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Presidency.



Tehran, 17 December 2024 - As part of the UNAMI's efforts to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among regional countries, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al-Hassan**, met in Tehran with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, **Mr. Abbas Araghchi**. They discussed the situation and developments in the region.

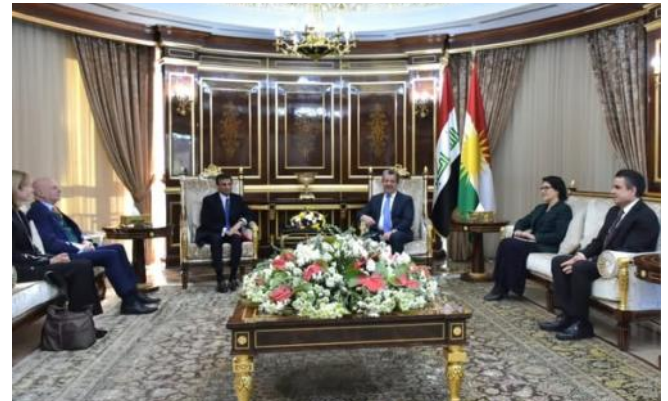
Photo courtesy of the MOFA Media Office.



Tehran, 17 December 2024 - As part of the UNAMI's efforts to implement its mandate and facilitate dialogue for a more secure, stable and resilient Iraq, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met in Tehran with the Deputy President for Strategic Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, **Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif**. They discussed the situation and developments in the region and emphasized that stability and prosperity of Iraq is of paramount importance to the region and the world at large.



Tehran, 18 December 2024 - As part of the UNAMI's efforts to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among regional countries, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met in Tehran with the President of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, **Dr. Seyyed Kamal Kharrazi**. They discussed significant developments in the region.



Erbil, 19 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, **Masrour Barzani**. They discussed the recent Security Council meeting on Iraq and political and security developments in Iraq and the region.



Erbil, 19 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the Leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, **Masoud Barzani**. They discussed recent Security Council meeting on Iraq and developments in Iraq and the region.



Baghdad, 21 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today in Baghdad with the President of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), **Bafel Jalal Talabani**. They discussed the current political situation in the country and the region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations and developments in Syria.



Baghdad, 21 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today the Head of the Popular Mobilization Authority, **Faleh Al-Fayyadh**. They discussed the current political situation in the country and the region, as well as how the Mission can contribute to development and stability of Iraq.



Baghdad, 29 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited today to **Ayatollah Sayyid Hussein Ismail Al-Sadr** at his residence in Al-Kadhimiya, Baghdad. During the meeting they discussed the current situation in the country and the region.



Baghdad, 29 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited today the Iraqi Jurisprudence Council at the Abu Hanifa Al-Nu'man Mosque, where he met with the group of Sunni Cleric Sheikhs led by **Sheikh Ahmed Hassan Al-Taha**. They discussed the current political situation in the country and the region.

(See SRSg Al Hassan's statement to the media on this occasion on page 7.)



Baghdad, 30 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the **His Grace Jean Sleiman**, Archbishop of the Latin Archdiocese of Baghdad, and **Charge d'Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Iraq, Fr. Charles Lwanga Ssuuna**. They exchanged thoughts on the current situation in the country and the region.

Women's Empowerment

Celebrating the Opening of the Zaha Hadid Center for Women in Mosul

Mosul, 11 November 2024 - The International Labour Organization (ILO), with the support of the Government of the Netherlands and in coordination with Iraq's Ministry of Youth and Sports, proudly announces the opening of the Zaha Hadid Center for Women in Mosul! This dedicated space marks a significant milestone for women's empowerment, providing essential resources, training, and opportunities to help women unlock their full potential and contribute to Iraq's sustainable development.

The Zaha Hadid Center will foster innovation, resilience, and independence among Iraqi women, supporting their journey to thrive and make lasting impacts within their communities. This collaboration reflects our commitment to building a future where women have equal opportunities to lead and succeed. Together, let's continue creating spaces that inspire and empower women. Here's to a future full of opportunity and equality!



Changing the system from within: women's empowerment in the Iraqi public health system

Hiroshima, Japan, 08 November 2024 - When asked about her personal goal for women in Iraq, Alia Abbas's answer is prompt and simple: "Make them happy!" Having worked in the public health sector for 31 years, Alia has dedicated her entire career to achieving just that. The UNITAR Gender Equality and Women Empowerment programme taught Alia how to manage her team effectively, which in turn boosted the skills level of her staff.

Alia Abbas is the director of the Community Development Division in the Iraqi Ministry of Health. She works tirelessly on raising awareness for women's issues in Iraq's primary healthcare centres. The primary healthcare centres offer free services to Iraq's diverse communities, reaching even those living in remote villages. Alia's section trains staff in these centres on issues like human rights and violence against women.

Her commitment is all the more needed as Iraqi women still face many challenges in their personal and professional lives. Iraq ranked 154th out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Topics such as violence against women remain sensitive in Iraq: according to a 2022 UNFP survey, 52 per cent of Iraqi women keep silent about domestic violence and do not inform anyone about it.

Because of this, ensuring that the primary healthcare centre staff are well-trained is crucial. The centres offer survivors of domestic violence a complete package that consists of treatment, psychological support and logistical services. They also set up an

external referral system where they direct women to hospitals, NGOs or the police.

The countries' institutions have been weakened by many years of war in Iraq, and many NGOs are active in filling the gaps. However, Alia is not sure whether relying on NGOs is a long-term solution; such organizations could easily leave as the situation in the country changes. Alia therefore believes that cooperation among public institutions to address violence against women is crucial.

Alia has seen some improvements. Within her own department, she lists health empowerment, mother-child care as well as vaccination and labour programmes as important areas to promote women's empowerment in the future.

Taking skills to the next level with UNITAR

In 2023, Alia joined the third phase of the UNITAR Gender Equality and Women Empowerment programme with 35 other participants from Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq who are decision-makers in their countries. The programme aimed to build the participants' leadership skills, as well as their advocacy and communication

capabilities, so that they can better implement gender equality through their work.

Participants have undergone self-paced online modules, webinars with experts, group discussions and peer reviews as well as mentoring and networking sessions. Working in country teams, they developed concrete action plan on an existing gender-mainstreaming initiative in their ministry/country.

Through training on tools like SWOT analysis, Alia gained a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in her own programme. After the UNITAR programme, she shared her findings with her managers, including detailed information for future improvements. Alia also trained her staff and, as a result, they can now provide better services to their communities.

She highlights that there are many different paths to promote women's empowerment. Women's empowerment could take place through health care, logistics, funding and supporting women in the workplace. What's important to Alia is to get started, even with small steps.

Her message is simple: "No violence, under any reason".



Wajida Khalaf Jassim: inspiring a generation of female leaders

Fallujah, 24 November 2024 - At 54, Wajida Khalaf Jassim never imagined herself as a cornerstone of transformation in her community. As a teacher at Al-Bushra Secondary School for Girls in Saqlawiya, she now shapes the lives of young women and cultivating a new generation of leaders who are Iraq's future.

A Witness to Change

Born and raised in Anbar Province, Wajida grew up witnessing the challenges that shaped her community. From conflict to rebuilding, she remained steadfast in her belief that education is the foundation of progress.

Yet, she knew that for real change to take root, her role as a teacher had to evolve into something more profound.

Her journey took a pivotal turn when she joined a leadership training program conducted by UNDP Iraq, targeting women in liberated governorates. This initiative, designed to support empowering women as agents for community resilience in Wajida. It wasn't just about personal growth it was about reimagining her classroom as a space to foster courage, leadership, and ambition among her students.

A Classroom Transformed

Returning to her school, Wajida carried with her a renewed sense of purpose. She began weaving lessons of leadership, resilience, and integrity



Wajida Khalaf Jassim: inspiring a generation of female leaders in Fallujah *(continued)*

into her curriculum, encouraging her students to think beyond societal limitations. Her words resonated deeply:

"Becoming a teacher, a woman capable of leading and facing life's challenges, is the best lesson we can give our students to guide them toward a better future."

She encouraged the girls to see themselves not just as students but as the architects of Iraq's future. Her approach was new, blending academic learning with real-world skills—critical thinking, public speaking, and decision-making all essential traits for the leaders Iraq needs.

"We are a society that needs to strengthen and deepen the role of women. By building strong and resilient leaders, we can develop real solutions to the challenges facing

women today," she explained.

This vision began to resonate throughout the community. Parents saw their daughters growing in confidence, peers began supporting one another, and even local leaders started recognizing the transformative power of empowering young women.

A Brighter Tomorrow

Wajida's work is part of a larger, hopeful shift in Iraq. Youth across the country are embracing the idea of women's leadership, recognizing the pivotal role they play in shaping Iraq's workforce and public life. The narrative is changing, women are no longer seen as passive participants but as active contributors to Iraq's development.

Her story serves as a powerful testament to how a single person, equipped with education and passion, can spark lasting change. Through her

dedication, Wajida is helping to build a foundation for a more inclusive, prosperous Iraq one where women not only share in its success but lead the way toward it.

The leadership training initiative by UNDP Building Resilience Through Employment Promotion programme, supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, provided through the German Development Bank KfW, continues to uplift women like Wajida. These programs are critical in nurturing resilience and fostering sustainable development in Iraq's regions liberated from ISIL. Wajida's journey is proof that education, when coupled with empowerment, creates a ripple effect that can transform not only individual lives but entire communities.

UN in Iraq marks 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls



Baghdad/Erbil, 26 November 2024 -

The United Nations in Iraq launched the annual 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls. This global campaign focuses on raising awareness, strengthening efforts to combat violence, and fostering an environment where women and girls can thrive in safety and dignity.

Activities during the campaign include two key events. A kick-off meeting took place on 25 November in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, creating synergies between the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and the 16 Days campaign by incorporating the commemoration of the 24th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The second event will take place in Baghdad on 2 December to underscore the nation's ongoing commitment to addressing violence against women and promoting their

leadership across all sectors.

Violence against women and girls is a critical issue globally and poses challenges in Iraq, particularly for displaced women and survivors of abuse. While Iraq has made progress through policy reforms and awareness campaigns, entrenched norms and systemic barriers persist, making it essential to maintain momentum and ensure continued progress. Enhancing and enforcing laws to combat violence against women and children remains a critical priority, as robust legal frameworks are essential to ensuring accountability, protecting survivors, and preventing future violence.

Additionally, online violence is a growing threat in Iraq, disproportionately impacting women and girls. This violence jeopardises their safety and limits their participation in online spaces,

hindering their education, employment and leadership opportunities. The UN calls for stronger cyber laws and greater public awareness to create a respectful digital culture so that women and girls can thrive.

Despite these challenges, Iraqi women have shown remarkable strength and resilience, continuing to lead in their communities and contribute to the nation's development. Whether advocating for their rights, supporting others through humanitarian efforts, or participating in leadership and decision-making roles, Iraqi women exemplify courage and determination in the face of adversity. Their unwavering spirit is a testament to their ability to overcome obstacles and drive positive change.

This year's campaign supports Iraq's development of its third National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, emphasizing women's leadership, stronger cross-sector partnerships, and local awareness campaigns. It underscores the need for comprehensive action to provide protection services, including safe spaces, psychological support, medical care, and legal aid, to promote the safety, empowerment, and resilience of women and girls.

"Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights that hinders Iraq's progress toward sustainable development. We must continue to break the silence,

UN in Iraq marks 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls *(continued)*

strengthen protections, and engage all sectors of society in this fight. Together, we can create a future where every woman and girl is safe and free to thrive. Let us act with urgency and work towards the realization of women's rights under Iraq's constitution," said Ghulam Isaczai, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

Eliminating violence against women and girls is central to building a stable and prosperous Iraq. The United Nations in Iraq remains committed to collaborating with the federal

Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and national, local, and international partners to achieve this vision to create a future

where every woman and girl can live free from violence, exploitation and abuse and realize her full potential. End Violence. Act Now.



UNiTE to end violence against women!

Baghdad, 25 November 2024 -

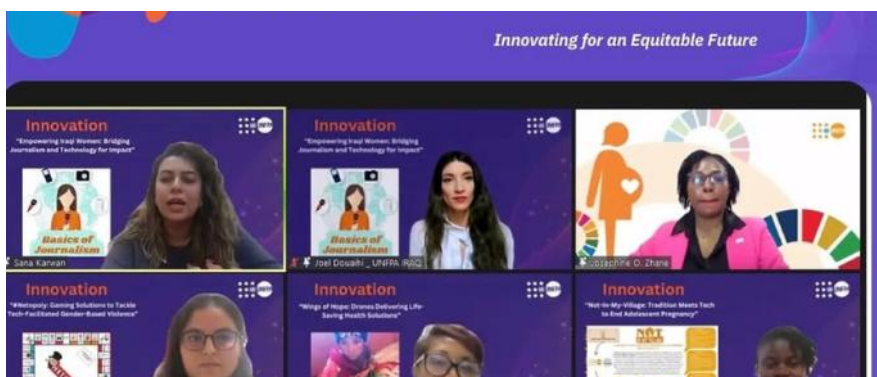
Today marks the beginning of the 16 Days of activism against violence against women and girls

Together with our partners, UNHCR is hosting seminars, art exhibitions, sports events, awareness sessions, and cultural performances to raise awareness and advocate for an end to gender-based violence.

There's #NoExcuse for violence. Join us in calling for a safer, more equitable world for everyone.



Empowering women in media!



Baghdad, 25 November 2024 – UNFPA is excited to share that UNFPA Iraq's Basics of Journalism

project has won the Digital Spotlight Award at the Innovation Fair 2024! This recognition highlights our

commitment to empowering women's voices through innovative solutions.

Since January 2024, the "Basics of Journalism" initiative has trained more than 186 women in media. 30% are now working in media, skilled and confidently reporting on crucial topics! UNFPA will continue to inspire and support the next generation of women journalists!

The fight to end violence against women and girls starts with powerful voices. UNFPA is empowering Iraqi women through its Women in Media project, proving that media is not just a tool for awareness but a catalyst for transformation.

UN Women on X

Baghdad, 26 November 2024 - Violence against women and girls hinders Iraq's progress and global development. Collective action in Iraq—through strengthened linkages between national, regional, and local levels, and partnerships with the Government, local leaders, and civil society—can drive the elimination of violence. By fostering cohesive collaboration across all levels, these efforts ensure a peaceful future where women and girls are safe, empowered, and celebrated for their contributions.



16 Days of Activism: Iraq reaffirms commitment to women's safety and empowerment



Baghdad, 03 December 2024 – As part of the global 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls, a national event was held in Baghdad, under the theme: “Caring for Women: A Path to a Prosperous Society.” Organized by the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, UN Women, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the event reaffirmed Iraq’s commitment to addressing violence and empowering women as integral to national stability and development. The event brought together government officials, international community, and civil society to review progress and identify gaps in efforts to protect women and girls. Dr. Yusra Kareem Mohsin, Director-General of the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, highlighted that prioritizing women’s safety is central to national prosperity, stating, “Investing in women’s protection is not just a moral

obligation; it is the foundation of a thriving and resilient society. Additionally, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Dr. Othman Al-Juhaishi, emphasized the empowerment of women through principles rooted in Islamic teachings, highlighting the importance of justice, equality, and dignity in fostering women’s leadership and protection. Najma Khan, representing the United Nations in Iraq and delivering opening remarks on behalf of UN Women, UNOCT, and UNFPA as part of a One UN approach, highlighted the critical role of addressing violence against women in advancing Iraq’s development goals. She highlighted UN Women’s support for women-led peacebuilding initiatives, UNOCT’s efforts to integrate the unique challenges faced by women and girls into counter-terrorism strategies, and UNFPA’s continued commitment to providing safe spaces for women and girls affected by violence across Iraq.

She noted, “Ending violence against women is not the responsibility of any single entity—it requires the collective will of governments, communities, and individuals”.

The National Directorate for Iraqi Women also provided a detailed presentation on its achievements in advancing protection mechanisms and addressing violence against women and girls. The presentation underscored the importance of a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to safeguarding women’s rights and enhancing their access to essential services. Furthermore, UNFPA highlighted the role of Iraq’s national census in identifying gaps in services and enabling targeted interventions for women and girls across the country. This data-driven approach will support evidence-based policy and programming, ensuring resources are directed to the most vulnerable populations in Iraq.

The 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls is an annual global campaign that runs from November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to December 10, Human Rights Day. This year’s campaign in Iraq aligns with the country’s broader development priorities, including the forthcoming Iraqi National Action Plan III on Women, Peace, and Security, ensuring women’s protection remains a national priority.

UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 02 December 2024 - In a world scarred by crises, violence against women and girls is still overlooked. Key support like medical care, psychosocial support and safe shelters must be at the heart of all humanitarian action. Stronger global efforts and financial support are vital to end violence.

UNFPA concludes 16 Days of Activism

Erbil, 10 December 2024 – UNFPA is honored to conclude the #16Days of Activism with representatives from the European Union Member States at Erbil shelter.

Together, we witnessed the vital support provided to survivors and reinforced the importance of safe spaces for survivors of violence.

Thank you to the EU Delegation office in Erbil, Consulat général de France à Erbil, Consulate General of the Netherlands in KRI, German Consulate General Erbil, Czech Consulate General Erbil, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland for your visit and continued

commitment to end violence against women and girls.



Celebrating the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 10 December 2024 – UNFPA celebrated the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Kirkuk.

This event raised awareness about the importance of combating violence against women, and highlighted the need to create a supportive environment that protects women's rights and ensures their safety from all

forms of discrimination and violence.

Highlights of the event:

Bazaar displaying handmade and artistic creations.

A theatrical performance presented by students of Al-Sumaria School.

Together, we work for a world where every woman lives freely and safely, away from violence and discrimination.



The DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq Isaczai meets with members of the Women Advisory Groups

Erbil, 08 December 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, met today with members of the Women Advisory Groups from different governorates to discuss ways of strengthening collaboration with the UN and advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Iraq.



Israa Kareem: a warrior's journey from illness to leadership

Diyala, 05 December 2024 - At 35, Israa Kareem has become a symbol of resilience and hope in Diyala. A nurse, mother of two, and a cancer survivor, she embodies the transformative power of determination and support. Her story highlights how adversity, when met with the right tools and training, can be transformed into an opportunity to lead and inspire others.

Battling the Dual Challenges of Illness and Responsibility

In 2019, Israa was diagnosed with stomach cancer, an illness that brought physical pain and emotional anguish. Her journey through chemotherapy and multiple surgeries was further complicated by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Balancing her demanding role as a healthcare worker and a caregiver for her family became an almost insurmountable task. Yet, she persevered, holding onto hope despite the hardships.

A Transformative Opportunity

Amid her recovery, Israa encountered a life-changing opportunity through the UNDP's "Strengthening the Role of Women Leaders in Community Development" training. This initiative, part of the Building Resilience Through Employment Promotion programme supported by Germany's Federal

Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Development Bank KfW, provided women like Israa with the leadership skills needed to make a difference in their communities.

From Survivor to Leader

The training became a turning point in Israa's life. It helped her regain her self-confidence, harness her inner strength, and develop practical skills to manage her responsibilities more effectively. More importantly, it gave her a new purpose—empowering others facing similar struggles. "The course taught me patience and strength," she reflected, noting how it equipped her to support others with compassion and resilience.

Inspiring Hope and Strength in Her Community

Israa now shares her journey with patients battling cancer, offering them hope and encouragement. In her role as a nurse, she inspires patients to confront their illnesses with determination, and her story serves as a powerful example of what is possible when strength and support converge. The leadership skills she gained from UNDP's training have allowed her to extend her impact beyond her family and patients, fostering a sense of hope and resilience throughout her community.



The Broader Impact of Empowerment Initiatives

Her achievements are a testament to the vital role that targeted training programs play in empowering women in Iraq. By enhancing leadership skills and building resilience, these initiatives not only transform individual lives but also strengthen communities, paving the way for sustainable development.

A Vision for a Brighter Future

Thanks to the steadfast efforts of its partners, UNDP continues to provide these vital opportunities, helping individuals like Israa turn personal challenges into stories of leadership and inspiration. Her journey exemplifies the transformative potential of resilience and empowerment in the face of adversity.

IOM on X

Baghdad, 11 December 2024 - IOM and Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland are joining forces to support Iraqi partners in building sustainable livelihoods and empowering women. Through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund, the new project will build on past support to women-led businesses, creating over 300 jobs.



Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) government focal points at the federal level in Iraq

Baghdad, 17 December 2024 - UN Women remains committed to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and to advancing implementation of the Iraq National Action Plan (INAP) III. In collaboration with the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, UN Women convened a series of M&E workshops in Baghdad targeting 43 WPS focal points at the ministerial and governorate level to enhance their skills in data collection, data quality, data assurance and reporting. These trainings focused on enhancing knowledge and strengthening reporting skills for WPS focal points to ensure they are well equipped to effectively monitor the implementation of INAPIII. In addition, these efforts aimed to strengthen accountability and ownership of government entities, fostering more coordination and sustainable progress towards supporting UNSCR1325.



UNICEF commemorates 16 Days of Activism in Dohuk

Dohuk, 16 December 2024 - UNICEF Iraq, Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women and Family (DCVAW) and Dohuk Polytechnic University hosted youth-led theatre and music events to counter gender-based violence against women and girls in Iraq. This gathering sparked conversations and strengthened partnerships for a safer environment for women and girls in Iraq. The powerful stories and moving performances were part of UNICEF's #16DaysOfActivism campaign this year and supported by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights

In accordance with the Security Council resolution 2732 (2024) UNAMI preserved its role in the field of human rights and accountability. UNAMI continues to promote accountability and the protection of international

human rights standards, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and national ownership, in order to strengthen the rule of law, improve governance in Iraq, and support the Government of Iraq's

economic development goals and projects.

Here is an overview of UNAMI's activities in this field in November and December 2024.

Baghdad, 05 November 2024 - UNAMI Human Rights Office held a roundtable discussion on the prevention of domestic violence. Participants included representatives from the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, the Ministry of Interior Family and Child Protection Directorate, the community police, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), representatives of civil society organizations, human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers.

The discussions were structured around the recommendations contained in UNAMI/OHCHR's public report "Accountability for Domestic Violence: Promoting Justice and Non-



Discrimination" issued earlier this year.

Domestic violence is one of the most insidious forms of discrimination that significantly hinders women's enjoyment of their rights and freedoms. The roundtable event provided an

opportunity for those actively engaged in preventing domestic violence and ensuring protection for survivors, to exchange practical ideas and discuss how to best to address these critical issues in a coordinated and collaborative way.

Wasit governorate, 06 November 2024 - UNAMI Human Rights Office, in coordination with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)/ Wasit Office, held a roundtable discussion with Wasit Police Command on the due process rights of defendants and the right to a fair trial under Iraqi and international law. The roundtable, attended by 34 police investigative officers including two women, and 8 IHCHR employees focused on the protection of fair trial guarantees including the right to legal counsel, the right to remain silent and

the right to an adequate defense. The roundtable also covered the national and international human rights legal

framework applicable to arrests and investigations as well as the prohibition of torture.



Mosul, 06 November 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, organized a one-day training on digital security and digital rights to enhance the protection for civil society organizations and activists in both online and offline space. Twenty-one staff and representatives (19 male, 2 female) from the Independent Human Rights Commission of Iraq and NGOs attended the training. The training focused on enhancing capacity of participants to protect information, safeguard their online activities, and advocate for the protection of human rights defenders in the digital domain. Participants were introduced to

practical tools to strengthen the safety of their digital environment and how to

report hate speech or any other harmful contents.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights *(continued)*



Baghdad, 12 November 2024 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office, in collaboration with Zoroastrian representation in Baghdad, held today a workshop in Baghdad. Twenty-five (25) participants (5 women and 20 men) attended the event, including members of Iraq's religious and ethnic component groups, faith leaders,

representatives of civil society. The workshop is part of the series of workshops to be conducted aimed at raising public awareness and advocacy to engage with the Government of Iraq in the implementation of the Concluding observations on the combined twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh periodic reports of Iraq. The

concluding observations, with its recommendations was issued on 24 August 2024 by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

The discussions focused on the positive aspects of the report submitted by the Government of Iraq to the Committee, the concerns raised by the Committee and its recommendations. Participants made recommendations on how to further strengthen engagement with the Government to ensure that the Committee's recommendations are fully implemented with the effective participation of minority groups. A local musician played live songs on the contribution of ethnic and religious groups to Iraq's civilization and development during the event.

Kirkuk, 13 November 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a one-day training on trauma-sensitive interviewing for staff of the Women Affairs Departments in Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah al-Din Governorates. The event was attended by 16 female participants and aimed at enhancing their knowledge and capacity in conducting trauma-sensitive interviews for victims of human rights violations. Participants engaged in practical exercises to develop interviewing

techniques and participated in scenarios that included conducting

interviews with victims of traumatic experiences.



Baghdad, 23 November 2024 - UNAMI Human Rights Office facilitated a dialogue on the legal and regulatory framework governing the right to freedom of expression in Iraq. Participants included representatives from the judicial and media regulatory authorities, journalists, defense lawyers and civil society representatives.

The dialogue aimed to enhance participants' understanding of the national and international legal standards that may, in some cases, allow legitimate restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, including under laws prohibiting defamation.

During the event, Judge Amer Hassan Shanta, a judge from the Publication

Court in Baghdad, conducted an interactive session on the national legal provisions covering public insult and defamation and on the investigation and prosecution of such charges.

The head of the Legal Department of the Commission on Media and Communications (CMC), Mr. Ali Yousif, also outlined the mandate and role of the CMC relating to the regulation of media institutions and content in Iraq.

The event concluded with a structured dialogue on how most effectively to exercise the right to freedom of expression whilst at the same time respecting the rights of others.

The dialogue, which was attended by 21 participants (11 women, 10 men), was a follow-up to a series of consultative discussions with stakeholders facilitated by UNAMI Human Rights Office between May and June 2024.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights (continued)



Mosul, 18 November 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq,

organized a one-day training on digital security and child protection aimed at enhancing the safety of children on

digital platforms. Nineteen staff and representatives (13 male, 6 female) from the Community Police in Ninewa attended the training.

The training focused on strengthening participants' capacity to address the risks children face in the digital environment and providing them with tools to take proactive measures to prevent online child rights violations. Participants were introduced to resources to enhance their knowledge of online child protection and lead community awareness efforts, promoting children's safety and well-being in the digital realm.



Basra, 23 November 2024 – UNAMI Human Rights Office facilitated a one-

day interactive session on the legal guarantees and limitations of the right

to freedom of expression. The event brought together 20 participants (14 men and six women), including representatives from judiciary, Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), Iraqi Bar Association, media institutions and civil society organizations. At the dialogue, participants discussed national and international legal provisions related to freedom of expression as well as the court's adjudication procedures related to criminal defamation cases.

Sulaymaniyah, 25 November 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a workshop on

“Investigative Human Rights Techniques under International Human Rights Law” for Law Enforcement officials (KRI Security

forces) from Sulaymaniyah governorate. A total of 22 participants benefitted from this training. Participants were briefed about general principles and concepts of international human rights law, including United Nations reporting and review mechanisms and state obligations. It also addressed the rights of detainees under international conventions, the Constitution of Iraq, and Kurdistan Regional law, and the role of investigators in protecting these rights, particularly during interrogation stage.



Basra, 27 November 2024 – UNAMI Human Rights Office, in collaboration with UNICEF, organized a roundtable discussion for members of the Basra Child Protection Working Group on promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The event brought together 22 participants (12 men and 10 women), including representatives from the police, the Directorate of Social Affairs, Directorate of Education, Directorate of Women Empowerment, Provincial Council, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, and

civil society. Participants were briefed on the human rights standards contained in the Convention on the

Rights of the Child and discussed the recommendations made to Iraq by UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights *(continued)*

Erbil, 28 November 2024 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized one-day training workshop on “Enhancing Advocacy and Technical Knowledge of CSOs on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Women's Rights Based on International Human Rights Standards”. In line with its mandate to provide technical support for the promotion of human rights and in view of the need to prevent violence against women and girls in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, HRO as part of the 16 Days of Activism on VAWG conducted the event under the 2024 theme of



‘UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls.’ The event was attended by 15 female participants from Erbil. The project aimed at enhancing the technical capacities of

women's rights organizations and activists by deepening their knowledge of key international human rights standards, and their relevance to violence against women and girls.



Basra, 3 December 2024 - UNAMI Human Rights Office in collaboration with Samraa Organization, an Iraqi NGO that promotes the right of Iraqis

of African descent, held a workshop on the rights of religious and ethnic minorities. The event was attended by 26 participants (five women and 21

men) including members of Iraq's component groups, local government officials, members of the Council of Representatives and the Basra Provincial Council, faith leaders, lawyers and representatives of civil society. The workshop examined the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination following its periodic review of Iraq that took place in August this year. Participants made recommendations on strengthening collaboration to ensure that the Committee's recommendations can be implemented with the inclusive participation of all component groups.

Erbil, 4 December 2024 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a training titled “Strengthening knowledge and skills for monitoring detention facilities and prisons in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq”. This training was specifically designed for staff of the Detention and Rule of Law Department of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Eleven staff of the IHCHR-KRI benefitted from the training on monitoring techniques for assessing prison conditions, including the use of checklists and observation methods



aligned with international best practices, and the human rights of detainees. Participants also received training on comprehensive report writing on conditions of detainees and prisons and conducting effective

advocacy in promoting due process of the law and respect for the rights of detainees. The training also enhanced the monitoring and reporting skills of participants on wider human rights issues.

Kirkuk, 05 December 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a one-day training for journalists and activists on “Protection of Personal Information Online.”. 15 participants (11 men and 4

women) from Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah al-Din governorates attended the training. Participants acquired knowledge and techniques to enhance protection from online attacks and threats, particularly protection of personal information.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights *(continued)*

Dohuk, 04 December 2024 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized one-day training on “Enhancing Advocacy Skills and Technical Knowledge of civil society organizations to end Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Women's Rights”. The event was organized as part of the 16 Days of Activism on Violence against women and Girls under the 2024 theme of ‘UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls.’ Seventeen participants (13 female and 4 male) from Dohuk attended the event which aimed at enhancing the technical capacity of women's rights



organizations and activists by deepening their knowledge of key international human rights standards relevant to violence against women and girls. The training focused on enhancing capacity of CSO in

protecting women and girls from violence in accordance with the international human rights framework and developing participants' advocacy skills for protecting women and girls from violence.

Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - On the occasion of the 76th anniversary of International Human Rights Day, the UNAMI Human Rights Office in coordination with the Deanship of the College of Arts at Al-Mustansiriyah University held a dialogue session with 120 students (80 female students, 40 male students) and number of professors of the college departments (Department of Arabic Language, Department of Philosophy, Department of English Language, Department of



French Language, Department of Translation) on the principles of human

rights and national and international protection mechanisms in Iraq.

Sulaymaniyah, 09 December 2024 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized one-day training on “Enhancing Advocacy Skills and Technical Knowledge of civil society organizations to end Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)”. The event was organized as part of the 16 Days of Activism on Violence against women and Girls under the 2024 theme of ‘UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls.’ Twenty

participants (19 female and 1 male) from Sulaymaniyah attended the event which aimed at enhancing the technical capacity of women's rights organizations and activists by deepening their knowledge of key international human rights standards relevant to violence against women and girls. The training focused on enhancing capacity of CSO in protecting women and girls from violence in accordance with the international human rights framework



and enhancing participants' advocacy skills for protecting women and girls from violence.

Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - As part of its technical support to the Government of Iraq for the implementation of the Concluding observations issued in August 2024 by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), UNAMI Human Rights Office held a workshop for civil society organizations on the rights of religious and ethnic minorities.

The event was attended by 16 participants (four women and twelve men), including members of Iraq's component groups, faith leaders,

lawyers and representatives of civil society. The event aimed to raise participants' awareness about the Government of Iraq's human rights obligations on the protection of minorities, using the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR's) Guide on Developing a Comprehensive Anti-discrimination Legislation for Protecting Minorities as a tool to help them advocate for the enactment of such a law in Iraq to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights of Iraqi minorities in accordance with international

human rights standards.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights *(continued)*

Basra, 11 December 2024 – UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion as part of the 16 Days of Activism on violence against women and girls. The event brought together 23 participants (12 men and 11 women) from Basra, Dhi-Qar, Maysan and Muthanna governorates, including representatives from the police, Directorate of Women Empowerment, Provincial Council, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, journalists, civil society, and BAR Association.

UNAMI delivered key messages relating to International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders, 16 Days of Activism, and International



Human Rights Day. Participants engaged in a comprehensive dialogue on challenges and potential solutions

pertaining to violence against women and girls and suggested recommendations in this regard.

Erbil, 12 December 2024 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized one-day workshop on “Joint Action on Climate Change - Establishment of the KRI Network on Climate Change and Human Rights” for the authorities and civil society organizations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The event was attended by 28 participants (10 female and 18 male) from KRG ministries, directorates, relevant departments and representatives of CSOs. The workshop aimed at promoting collaboration among civil society actors and the KRG,

and to establish a Network on Climate Change and Human Rights in the KRI. Participants also discussed advocacy options and the need for the development of human rights-based climate change policies and legislation

for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Furthermore, participants discussed the Terms of Reference of the proposed Network, the next steps and timelines for various actions identified during the workshop.



Baghdad, 12 December 2024 - UNAMI Human Rights Office, in joint collaboration with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)/ Baghdad Office, conducted a training session targeting senior officials at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) including

Undersecretaries and Directors-General. The training focused on Iraq's national and international obligations in the context of social and labour rights. The roundtable was attended by 15 government officials including two women officials.



Sulaymaniyah, 16 December 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a one-day training titled “Promoting NGOs Engagement with UN Human Rights Mechanisms and drafting of shadow reports” with a specific focus on engagement with and reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The event was attended by 22 participants (17 female, 5 male) representing NGOs from various governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Participants agreed on the

roles and timelines for the preparation of a shadow report which is due for submission to the Committee on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by 15 February 2025.



UNAMI Human Rights Office continues capacity building on and promotion of protection of human rights *(continued)*

Dhi-Qar, 17 December 2024 – UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion, in collaboration with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, on “International and National Standards on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials”. The event brought together 16 participants (11 men and 3 women) from police and two participants (2 men) from Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights from Dhi-Qar governorate. The event aimed at strengthening awareness of police officials with command-and-control responsibilities in relation to public order management to ensure that the force employed by police complies with



the basic principles on the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials. Participants engaged in an

inclusive discussion on understanding the basic principles on the use of force and firearms during demonstrations.

Mosul, 19 December 2024 - The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), jointly with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), organized a one-day training “Protecting Women and Girls from Violence and promoting equality” using the theme of the 16 Days of Activism campaign - end violence against women and girls. The event was attended by 20 participants (15 women and 5 men), representing the IHCHR, Nineveh Governorate Council, NGOs, universities, and activists. Participants highlighted the need for collective

action to protect the rights of women, children, and vulnerable groups, and to

put an end to all forms of violence and discrimination.



Erbil, 22 December 2024 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), jointly with the Independent Human Rights Commission in the Kurdistan Region (IHRC-KR), organized a one-day training on “Freedom of Expression and the Right of Peaceful Assembly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.” Participants engaged in constructive dialogue on protecting freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly and discussed issues of concern to find common solutions in accordance with Iraq’s international human rights obligations. A total of 31 participants (25 men and 6 women) representing the IHRC-KR, civil society, media and security personnel, attended the event. Participants also discussed the use of broad provisions of the Penal Code prohibiting defamation and legal and regulatory measures. The event provided an opportunity for

various stakeholders to exchange views and promote measures to protect

freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly.



IHCHR event to mark International Human Rights Day



Baghdad, 08 December 2024 - UNAMI Human Rights Office participated in an event organized by the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The event was held under the auspices of the Minister of Justice Dr. Khaled Shawani, and in the presence of the representative of the President of the Republic, Counselor Miqdad Al-Sharifi, the Prime Minister's Human Rights Advisor, Dr. Zidan Khalaf Al-Atwani, and the Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, Dr. Wahda Al-Jumaili, as well as representatives of government institutions, members of the diplomatic community and representatives of civil society. Speaking at the event, Mr. Rupert White, Acting Head of UNAMI Human Rights Office, emphasized that "the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of human rights have real-life relevance and play an essential role as a preventive, protective and transformative force to change the life of all Iraqis for the better."

Here is the text of Mr. White speech:

"Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Thank-you for the opportunity to be with you today for this important commemoration.

International Human Rights Day commemorates the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out a broad range of fundamental rights and freedoms to which all of us are entitled. It guarantees the rights of every individual everywhere, without distinction based on nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status.

Today the acceptance by all United Nations Member States of the basic Human Rights laid down in the Universal Declaration emphasizes the relevance of Human Rights in our daily lives.

Human Rights Day 2024 invites us all to unite under the theme of "Our Rights. Our Future. Right Now."

What does this slogan mean in practice? It means that human rights

are not just abstract ideas but they affect everyone, every day. The principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have real-life relevance and play an essential role as a preventive, protective, and transformative force to change the life of all Iraqis for the better.

Human Rights are the common thread that binds us all together to foster peace and stability. By establishing, recognising and adhering to a common set of values and principles that apply universally, human rights help to avoid violations, conflicts and abuses before they happen.

Human rights are not merely abstract ideas. They offer concrete norms, laws and a vital framework that protects against abuses, violations and other harms, ensuring everyone, everywhere can live in dignity and respect.

Human Rights are a powerful force for good. Upholding, and promoting human rights isn't only about addressing present injustices, it's about encouraging all of us to take action to support human rights initiatives and join together to create a fairer and more equal future.

Across the world, national human rights institutions such as the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) play a crucial role in promoting and monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights standards at the national level and United Nations human rights supports the effective implementation of the IHCHR's independent mandates to promote and protect human rights.

Together, we hold the power to build a future based on freedom, justice and peace. That power comes from human rights.

Thank you."

Freedom of Expression

UNESCO discusses the legal boundaries of AI use in journalism and content creation

Baghdad, 16 November 2024 - A team of UNESCO experts, alongside journalists and representatives from government entities, discussed the judicial, legislative, and executive roles related to the use of artificial intelligence in media and press.

UNESCO held a series of discussion sessions as part of its international efforts to promote media and digital literacy, supported by the Multi-Donors Programme (MDP) for Freedom of

Expression and Safety of Journalists. The first session shed light on AI tools

that assist journalists and digital content creators, as well as the



UNESCO discusses the legal boundaries of AI use in journalism and content creation *(continued)*

judiciary's role in addressing such content.

The session also focused on recent judicial developments in handling cases of opinion and expression involving journalists and content creators, including a decision by the Court of

Publication and Media in Al-Karkh to transfer such cases to relevant regulatory authorities to carry out their responsibilities. UNESCO deemed this step significant, as it introduces greater flexibility in the legal processes affecting this sector and its workers.

The smart digital tools presented to participants included methods for reviewing and verifying content prior to publication, helping to avoid legal consequences. Among the most notable tools were Fact-Checking Tools (FCT).

Iraqi Judiciary takes step toward increased freedom of expression

Baghdad, 13 November 2024 -

Through Joint efforts taken between UNESCO and the Iraqi judiciary since 2022 the Baghdad-Karkh Publishing and Media Court, presided over by Judge Amer Hassan Shanta, has now taken the decision to move publishing and media cases from a criminal path to a civil one.

This shift will be overseen by regulatory bodies such as the Communications and Media Commission (CMC). Judge Amer Hassan Shanta has confirmed that violations of broadcasting and media regulations will now fall under the CMC's sanctions regime, rather than be dealt with under criminal prosecution. This change should provide significant protection for media workers, allowing disputes to be resolved within a civil framework. UNESCO set three major milestones in its cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary under its 2022-2024 programs. These included: establishing specialized courts for publishing and media cases, forming a Freedom of

Expression Judges' Council, and transferring freedom of expression cases to regulatory authorities instead of criminal courts.

This accomplishment comes as part of the "Breaking the Silence" project

funded by the Dutch Embassy in Iraq, and the "Multi-Donor Program for Freedom of Expression and Journalist Safety (MDP)," marking a significant step in supporting freedom of expression in Iraq.



Artificial Intelligence and the Rule of Law: intensive training for judges in the Arab region with active Iraqi participation



Doha, Qatar, 13 December 2024 - Doha hosted an intensive training course from December 8 to 12, 2024, under the supervision of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The course targeted judges from various countries in the Arab region and featured notable participation from Iraqi judiciary representatives. It

focused on discussing key issues related to artificial intelligence (AI) and the rule of law, exploring ways to integrate modern technology into judicial processes while upholding human rights and ensuring fair trials.

Dia Thabet, UNESCO's Program Officer for Artificial Intelligence in the Judiciary, stated:

"The course covered several key

themes, most notably global tools for training judges on artificial intelligence, alongside modern models and specialized training programs designed to enhance judges' capacity to understand and use AI technologies in their work. The program also aimed to explore mechanisms for integrating AI into judicial processes by showcasing international experiences of fully or partially automated smart courts using AI technologies."

The training also addressed human rights and the right to fair trials, with participants and organizers discussing AI's impact on ensuring justice in court proceedings and how to prevent bias or discrimination resulting from algorithms.

Participants reviewed international experiences and innovative models of smart courts in countries like Estonia

Artificial Intelligence and the Rule of Law: intensive training for judges in the Arab region with active Iraqi participation *(continued)*

and China. These nations have adopted smart systems to manage cases, such as virtual judges for minor cases and AI-powered applications to analyze evidence and expedite judicial procedures. While these models have successfully improved efficiency and reduced litigation times, they have also raised concerns about data privacy and security.

Legislation and Emerging Crimes

The sessions tackled the legislative gaps in many countries concerning crimes related to AI, both direct—such as deepfakes and cybersecurity breaches—and indirect, like those stemming from errors in intelligent systems. Practical solutions were proposed, including the need to update national legislation to keep pace with rapid technological advancements.

Privacy and Data Security Challenges

Participants raised issues regarding

privacy protection and data security in the context of AI usage. Discussions emphasized the importance of establishing strict standards for the use of personal data within judicial systems to prevent misuse.

Iraqi Participation

The Iraqi judiciary made a notable contribution, presenting insights drawn from their local context and expressing interest in adopting AI technologies to enhance court performance in Iraq. They also highlighted challenges related to technical infrastructure and the need for continuous training.

Recommendations

The training concluded with several key recommendations, including: Strengthening partnerships between judicial bodies and technology institutions to develop AI systems that align with international standards.

Investing in training judges to effectively handle modern technologies. Establishing a comprehensive legislative framework to regulate AI use in the judicial field.

The course emphasized that AI presents a unique opportunity to modernize judicial systems in the Arab region but requires careful consideration to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law. Initiatives like this one, led by UNESCO, represent an important step toward building sustainable and modern judicial systems.

The key question remains: Will AI become an ideal partner for the judiciary, or will it continue to be a challenge requiring further balance between technology and humanity? This question is postponed as judicial systems across the Arab region seek answers in the upcoming year, 2025.

Living with Disabilities

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities and International Volunteer Day (IVD) celebrated at the UN premises in Baghdad

Baghdad, 04 December 2024- Today, we celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) and International Volunteer Day (IVD) at the UN Compound in Baghdad! The event was attended by the Executive Director of the High Council of Youth Mr. Ali Helal Khalaf.

In his opening remarks, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai emphasized the UN commitment to continue to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities as part of building an inclusive society where everyone can thrive – “When given the opportunity, all persons with disabilities can excel and reach their full potential.”



This year's IDPD theme, “Leadership and Resilience,” strikes a chord in Iraq - a country where decades of conflict have left many with disabilities. While steps have been taken, we must do

more to ensure inclusive policies that empower everyone to participate and thrive.

The event was filled with inspiration! From a heartfelt group rendition of the Iraqi national anthem in sign language to a moving musical performance by a talented artist with disabilities, every moment celebrated resilience and creativity. The open-air gallery of artwork by young persons with disabilities was a powerful showcase of their talent, determination, and ability to inspire us all.

Let's champion diversity, amplify unheard voices, and work together for a future where everyone can lead, serve, and shine.



UNICEF on X

Baghdad, 02 December 2024 - Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Let's continue working together to ensure that children with disabilities are included, protected, and empowered to reach their full potential. Together, we can make a difference! #IDPD #ForEveryChild.

WFP on X

Baghdad, 02 December 2024 - People with disabilities still encounter multiple barriers to accessing the things they need. The World Food Programme (WFP) ensures that persons with disabilities have access to healthy and nutritious food.

#IDPD2024 #DisabilityDay #IDPD

UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 03 December 2024 - On the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, UNFPA recognizes that leadership starts with inclusion.

Empowering persons with disabilities to lead on health, rights, and well-being is vital, especially in humanitarian crises and conflicts. Yet, too often, they are excluded from critical decisions, and their needs are not prioritized.

By uplifting their voices and collecting disability-disaggregated data, we can ensure no one is left behind and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable future.



UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 05 December 2024 - Empowering women with disabilities to take leadership positions brings unique perspectives that transform policymaking. Their intersectional experience creates a more effective and equitable perspective.

SRS for Iraq Al Hassan attends the annual carnival celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities organized by the Iraqi Alliance of Disability

Baghdad, 10 December 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, attended the annual carnival celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities organized by the Iraqi Alliance of Disability (IADO). The United Nations in Iraq fully supports the efforts of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to promote the rights of people with disabilities and special needs and its work to provide a comprehensive environment that supports their empowerment and active participation in society.



IOM on X

Baghdad, 08 December 2024 - How can tech empower persons with disabilities?

On #IDPD2024, IOM + U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Makers of Baghdad Foundation & IOT Kids united in Baghdad to explore inclusive technology and hear stories & ideas from IOM's program's participants with vision impairments on how to build a more inclusive future, leaving no one behind.



Soft skills are essential for success, both in business and beyond!

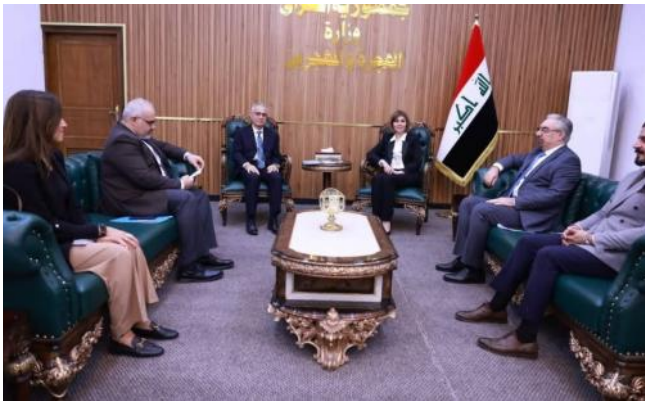
Duhok, 07 November 2024 - UNHCR Iraq and the International Trade Centre (ITC) held a 'Kick for Trade' training for refugees in Domiz refugee camp in Duhok. Through sport activities, participants built vital skills like teamwork, resilience, and focus which are key tools that empower communities and fuel entrepreneurial dreams.

UNHCR collaborates with ITC to empower displaced communities in Iraq, marking a significant step towards fostering economic self-reliance among refugees in the region.



UNHCR on X

Baghdad, 07 November 2024 - From Iraq to Lebanon. As Lebanon faces a worsening humanitarian crisis, UNHCR is deploying some of its extra stocks to support families impacted by the ongoing hostilities. It is all about teamwork.



Baghdad, 25 November 2024 - In today's meeting with Minister of Migration and Displacement **Mrs. Evan Faeq Jabro**, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident, and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, stressed the importance of sustaining services in displacement camps across Iraq and advancing durable solutions for IDPs.



Erbil, 08 December 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, met KRG Minister of Interior, **Rêber Ahmed**, to discuss advancing IDP solutions under the Durable Solutions Roadmap, stressing the urgency of closing the IDP file once and for all.

Supporting sustainable reintegration and community stability in Iraq

Erbil, 18 November 2024 - In partnership with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, UNDP implemented a internal consultation workshop for Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) staff in Erbil to discuss the draft Reintegration Strategy and gather insights and expertise for improvement.

During the workshop, participants discussed how to strengthen the MoMD's strategy for supporting reintegration of returnees, build teamwork and accountability, and work toward a shared vision for effective reintegration.

This workshop was organized with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

(SIDA) through UNDP Iraq's Reintegration of Iraqis Returning from Syria's Al-Hol Camp (CRRISA) project.



Migration, asylum, and humanitarian challenges: between international responsibility and national commitments

"Beit Al-Hikma" in Baghdad, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other academic institutions, organized an international conference titled "Migration, Asylum, and Humanitarian Challenges". The conference focused on finding sustainable solutions and community policies to govern migration and asylum issues.

Baghdad, 12 December 2024 (ILO News) - Under the patronage of the Prime Minister of Iraq, Engineer Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, the International Conference on Migration, Asylum, and Humanitarian Challenges concluded today at the "Beit Al-Hikma" Intellectual Center in Baghdad. The conference was organized in cooperation with the ILO, various national governmental institutions, universities, and academic and research centers from Iraq, the Arab region, and the world. It brought together academics, national and international partners from various sectors to discuss migration and asylum issues globally, with a particular focus on the Arab world. The ILO provided technical and financial support to this conference as part of its efforts under the EU-funded Social Protection Reform Program in Iraq. The conference focused on the realities of migration and asylum in Iraq, the Arab world, and the international context. It hosted academics from over 20 countries, presenting 140 research papers addressing different aspects of migration and asylum issues. Participants came from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Turkey, France, China, the United States, Bangladesh, and Iran.

The conference discussions aimed to explore the various factors driving youth migration, understand the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees, and highlight migration and asylum issues, human rights, and the rights of migrant workers to decent work and social guarantees.

Over two days, the conference examined the policies and measures needed to govern migration, ensuring the rights of migrants, returnees, and refugees, reducing the risks they face, facilitating decent employment opportunities, protecting their legal, economic, and social rights, and



combating human trafficking, forced labor, and migrant smuggling.

The conference shed light on migration, displacement, and asylum in Iraq and the Arab world through research and statistics, aiming to identify the main challenges facing countries in governing migration.

In his opening speech, Professor Abdul Baqi Al-Khazraji, a member of the Board of Trustees of Beit Al-Hikma and chair of the conference's preparatory committee, stated: "Migration is often the result of searching for a better life, but it faces significant challenges that require cooperation to find sustainable solutions that protect youth, the true wealth of society. To counter this critical phenomenon that has significantly impacted Iraqi society in recent years, he emphasized the importance of cooperation, solidarity, and joint action, stressing the need to find effective solutions to retain the country's most precious resource—its youth—as the spirit of the future, hope of society, and an invaluable treasure." This conference comes at a time when the Arab region is experiencing waves of displacement, migration, and asylum due to security events in recent months. This reflects the importance of this issue during such a critical period, requiring concerted efforts at the international and regional levels to mitigate the economic and social impacts on affected groups, particularly displaced persons and refugees, through national social protection systems in the region. It also emphasizes the need for employment policies to include clear objectives in this regard.

Understanding the root causes and motivations behind migration and asylum is one of the most critical steps in developing policies and strategies for migration governance. In his speech at the conference, Mr. Karim Al-Nouri, Deputy Minister of Migration, stated: "We are looking to address the causes, not the results. Unfortunately, most

previous efforts focused on finding solutions after the events occurred. Today, we are trying to address the causes of migration. Iraq has earned the respect of international organizations, the European Union, and the United Nations for its continuous cooperation in this field."

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda highlights that economic growth and decent work reinforce each other. Creating conditions for sustainable and inclusive prosperity is crucial for a significant number of low-skilled migrant workers who often work in exploitative conditions and low-wage environments. This is especially the case when migrants are in irregular situations, forcing them to work in the informal economy, where exploitation limits their gains and their ability to contribute to the development of their home and host countries.

Dr. Maha Katta, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, affirmed: "By strengthening the capacities of labor inspection departments, expanding social security coverage, and fostering dialogue between workers, employers, and unions, Iraq can chart a path toward a just and sustainable future that provides decent job opportunities for all."

The conference covered four main themes: the historical and social dimensions of migration, factors influencing displacement movements, ways to enhance social protection for migrants, and the rights of irregular migrant workers.

During the conference, the ILO organized a dialogue session on migration, asylum, and decent work. The session featured ILO experts, government officials from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Planning, and representatives from labor organizations and the Iraqi Federation of Industries. Discussions addressed governmental measures to regulate foreign labor, achievements made, and

Migration, asylum, and humanitarian challenges: between international responsibility and national commitments *(continued)*

ongoing challenges in this field. Labor and employer organizations presented their actions to protect migrant workers' rights, implementing Labor Law No. 37 of 2015 and the Pension and Social Security Law No. 18 of 2023, which ensure protections for migrant workers equal to national workers. ILO experts highlighted the situation of migrant labor in the Arab region, international labor standards, and implemented programs.

The conference concluded with recommendations to enhance integrated national policies supporting

migration governance, maintaining collaboration between Iraq and its international partners to achieve sustainable development that promotes decent work and social protection.

The ILO continues to provide technical support to the Iraqi government and social partners through the Decent Work Program in the country, reinforcing development goals centered on decent work and social protection.

Under the EU-funded program for social protection reform in Iraq, the ILO collaborates with Beit Al-Hikma through various labor market activities

and the social protection system. Events like this conference revolve around promoting decent work through diverse policies, programs, and activities involving national partners from the government, labor organizations, employer organizations, civil society, research centers, and academic experts. The goal is to foster dialogue and propose systematic, context-specific solutions to ensure inclusive economic growth and social development in Iraq.

DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai reaffirms the United Nations' full support for Iraq's efforts to return the remaining of their citizens from Al-Hol Camp

Baghdad, 17 December 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, joined by Iraqi National Security Advisor, Mr. Qassim Al-Araji, in the end-of-year review of challenges and progress in the return of Iraqis from Al-Hol Camp. DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai reaffirmed the United Nations' full support for Iraq's efforts to return the remaining of their citizens.



Humanitarian

From displacement to dignity: civil documentation empowers Iraqi father for his children's future

Baghdad, 30 October 2024 - For years, Azhar set off to work each morning with a knot of worry tightening in his chest. As a day labourer in the construction sector, he faced constant uncertainty—not just about securing work and a wage for the day, but about the safety and well-being of his family back home. Lacking documentation, they were vulnerable, without reliable access to the services they might need if something went wrong.

In 2014, Azhar and his family had fled Fallujah, seeking safety in Baghdad. Since then, he explains, they'd been tangled in a bureaucratic web, struggling to secure official documents for their children. Born into displacement, his children needed

papers that could only be obtained by returning to the very place they left.

As a result, Azhar was unable to register his children in the local schools and health clinics would turn them away. Coupled with the family's lack of financial means to be able to access these services privately, this left them in a precarious situation.

I was very worried about their future," Azhar states. "No one would accept them without documentation. I felt lost. Earlier in 2024, however, everything changed when UNHCR's partner, the Legal Clinics Network (LCN), learned about Azhar's case and stepped into help.

A significant obstacle was that, because Azhar's children were above a certain age, they needed to go to court to certify

their births and family lineage. As part of this, they also took a DNA test to prove that Azhar was their father. With the support of LCN and UNHCR, within 12 months, Osama and Dunia received their birth certificates and national IDs.

The first thing I did when they got



From displacement to dignity: civil documentation empowers Iraqi father for his children's future *(continued)*

their documentation was take them to school. It was a day I'll never forget, Azhar recalls with a smile, pride and relief evident in his eyes.

Osama and Dunia's documents are just some among 31,000 civil records secured for displaced Iraqis through UNHCR's support and in collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Interior so far in 2024. Working with partners like Harikar, Heartland Alliance International, IRC, INTERSOS, LCN, and Terre des Hommes, civil documentation enables families like

Azhar's critical access to education, healthcare, and other social services. Having these documents also allows them to exercise essential rights, including freedom of movement and civic participation.

For Azhar and his children, receiving their documents was a moment of restored hope and an important step towards realizing their dreams of becoming a lawyer and a doctor. What had once felt like an unscalable barrier is now a bridge to possibility and a brighter future.

"I had lost all hope for a good future for my children," he reflects, a newfound optimism in his voice. "But now, with their education and rights secured, anything seems possible."

UNHCR thanks its major donors who supported our efforts in civil documentation: Canada, France, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the Netherlands through the PROSPECTS partnership and the United States.

By Karlo Jeelo in Baghdad, UNHCR

UNHCR welcomes renewed funding from France to support forcibly displaced people in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 November 2024 - The Government of France has announced a grant of EUR 1,000,000 to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, in Iraq. This funding will enable crucial work to strengthen Iraq's legal frameworks related to displaced populations, ensuring access to asylum, preventing refoulement, and enhancing protection for refugees.

The funding will also enable UNHCR to continue its work to reduce the risk of Gender-Based Violence and ensure survivors receive the help they need, as well as to provide comprehensive support to refugee children.

Pauline Fresneau, UNHCR's Acting Representative in Iraq, lauded France's commitment and resolve to finding solutions for forcibly displaced individuals. "This funding comes at a critical time, supporting efforts of UNHCR and the Government of Iraq to implement vital policies and programmes that ensure the protection of forcibly displaced populations across the country. France has honored its

commitment to not leave behind Syrian refugees and internally displaced Iraqis".

As many internally displaced persons (IDPs) and IDP returnees in Iraq may have lost or damaged their documents, or may never have had access to such documentation before, UNHCR will also use the funds to address the remaining needs of internally displaced Iraqis (IDPs) by supporting their access to civil identity documents. Having these documents is pivotal for Iraqis to access public services and participate in the public affairs of their country.

"France has consistently supported Iraq to face the consequences of the conflicts and crises it had to deal with" stated His Excellency Patrick Durel, Ambassador to France in Iraq. "We continue to do so in close coordination with the Iraqi authorities and all relevant stakeholders, such as UNHCR. We deem it important to provide vulnerable people in Iraq with the assistance they need, so that they get better access to basic services and

ultimately be better integrated into the society."

France is one of the top ten contributors to UNHCR's global operations, providing reliable and consistent funding. To date, France has contributed over USD 100 million to address the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, with a notable emphasis on the Middle East, including Iraq.

Currently, Iraq hosts over 300,000 refugees, mainly from Syria. The majority reside in urban areas alongside Iraqi communities, while about 28 per cent are in nine refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). There are also over 1 million Iraqis who are internally displaced, with 115,000 living in 21 IDP camps in the KR-I. UNHCR continues to work with the authorities to find dignified and sustainable solutions for IDPs, including safe and voluntary return to areas of origin, relocation to other areas within the country and local inclusion.

In Kurdistan, refugees have access to public healthcare

Erbil, 14 November 2024 - Did you know that in Kurdistan, refugees have access to public healthcare?

At UNHCR, we're committed to supporting the Directorate of Health to provide healthcare for all.

So far in 2024, over 137,000 individuals—76% refugees and 24% from the host community - have received healthcare services in clinics supported by UNHCR, including mental health support.



UN Iraq SRSB visits rehabilitation centre, underscores importance of repatriation and reintegration



Jedaa 1 Rehabilitation Centre, Ninewa, 17 November 2024 – Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSB) for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, visited today the Jedaa 1 Rehabilitation Centre in Ninewa Governorate.

At the Centre, the SRSB met with the Minister of Migration and Displaced, Mrs. Evan Faeq Jabro. The discussions focused on strengthening coordination and cooperation on the repatriation and reintegration file.

The SRSB toured the facility, currently home to an estimated 2,000 returnees from the Al-Hol camp in Syria, most of them women and children. He was briefed on the work of UN agencies and their partners, which support the Government in service delivery and coordination inside the Centre. He also met with a number of residents in the interest of hearing first-hand their comments, concerns, and hopes, in order to address any concerns they might have.

The rehabilitation Centre, under the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, has become the transit facility for a new life for over 10,000 individuals since May 2021. Rehabilitation and reintegration support for the returnees, which includes legal assistance to access civil documentation, mental health and psychosocial support, education, health, economic empowerment and livelihoods programs to strengthen life skills, and efforts to reconnect returnees with their families and communities, are some of the services the Centre offers.

Commending the Iraqi Government's efforts to repatriate its citizens, SRSB Al Hassan highlighted the significant progress already made, noting the substantial number of individuals already repatriated and reintegrated into communities despite complex

security, legal, and humanitarian challenges. Dr. Al Hassan called for the swift and safe return of all Iraqis from Al-Hol camp.

"Iraq's proactive approach is a positive example for other countries to follow. Iraq of today, and Iraq of the future, is demonstrating that responsible repatriations are possible, by finding dignified solutions anchored in the principles of accountability, reintegration, respect for human rights, and dignity." He called on other nations to follow suit and take similar actions for their citizens in Al-Hol.

Half the residents of Al-Hol camp are Iraqis. Their situation is both a humanitarian and security crisis. Prolonged confinement in such restricted and dire conditions poses greater protection and security risks than returning them in a controlled and managed way, safely and properly reintegrating them back into their communities.

Given the large number of Iraqis awaiting return, continued international support on this file is essential to ensure repatriation and reintegration in a safe and sustainable manner that safeguards their dignity.

For his part, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, said: "The need to accelerate the return of citizens from Al-Hol is urgent, despite the significant challenges Iraq faces, including regional instability and significant shifts in international funding. This urgency is especially critical for vulnerable groups like unaccompanied children, women survivors of violence, and victims of trafficking."

Here is the text of the remarks to the press from SRSB Al Hassan at the Jedaa 1 Rehabilitation Centre:

"Greetings to all,

This is my first visit to the Jedaa 1 Rehabilitation Centre, to witness first-hand the efforts being made in support of those returning to Iraq after a prolonged period of displacement and suffering in Al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria, and also to meet with and hear from the residents here about their concerns, comments, and aspirations.

As I mentioned already, I would like to begin by acknowledging the efforts of the Government of Iraq, specifically the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, the Office of National Security Advisor, the Ministry of Interior, and all other Government and international partners who have provided and are still providing assistance, protection, and support for displaced populations. These efforts are truly commendable.

I would also wish to express, on behalf of the United Nations, our full support for Iraq's efforts, emphasizing the importance of continued returns from Al-Hol camp. We urge all other countries and the international community to take responsibility and to act towards the international goal to repatriate all categories from Al-Hol camp.

Iraq's proactive approach is a positive example that should be noted. Iraq is demonstrating, through this program, that responsible and safe repatriation is possible, through actions and measures anchored in the principles of accountability, protection, dignified reintegration into society, and respect for human rights.

The main point that I would like to stress here is ensuring the dignity of people, protecting societies, and overcoming all the negative aspects and pains of the past. Iraq is capable of that. Iraq is on the brink of creating a unique international experience. We in the United Nations are working, your excellency, together with the Iraqi Government and with you, to achieve that.

When United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited this Centre in March 2023, he appealed from here to all countries with their citizens in Al-Hol camp to do the same as Iraq is doing, to work hard to repatriate their citizens from this camp and resettle them in a dignified and safe manner, in line with international law and maintaining human dignity, and in the case of children, guided by the principles of the best interests of children.

I reiterate this call today, and I would

UN Iraq SRSO visits rehabilitation centre, underscores importance of repatriation and reintegration *(continued)*

like to point out that there is no room for inaction. This is a matter of human decency, and it is a matter of security. The longer we let this untenable situation in Al-Hol fester, the more resentment and despair will grow, the greater the risks of exploiting such situations and circumstances and the greater the risks to security and stability, not just for Iraq, but also for the rest of the region.

Today's visit, together with my host, Her Excellency Dr. Evan, is a reminder of the vital role that international and multilateral collaboration plays in addressing the needs of vulnerable communities. The United Nations stands firmly alongside the Government of Iraq in our shared commitment to providing safe, dignified, and sustainable solutions for whom? For those who have suffered the consequences of displacement and the legacy of the painful past. It is essential that we continue to work together to ensure that the reintegration process is comprehensive, sustainable, and safe, and to work together for a promising and bright future.

The return of Iraqis to their homes is not just about coming back to a place – they are returning to a future. A future where they can once again rebuild their lives, contribute positively to their communities, and ensure that their children – who are first and foremost Iraqis – have the opportunities they deserve. Reintegration is not without its challenges, and we must be mindful of the obstacles that returnees face in terms of their security, decent livelihoods, education opportunities, social acceptance, and protection. We in the United Nations do not accept any violation or humiliation of human dignity. The rule of law must prevail. Credible institutions that protect the country and its citizens should be activated. Human rights must be respected, and human dignity must be cared for. We are working with the Iraqi Government and authorities to ensure that.

The Rehabilitation Centre, under the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, has become the transit facility and the portal of safe passage for a new life for over 10,000 individuals since May 2021. Our hope and objective is for this to expand, including the strengthening of the quality of services, worthy of Iraq and the dignity of the Iraqi people.

I have had the opportunity, with my colleagues, to tour the facility alongside

my esteemed host, Her Excellency the Minister of Migration and Displaced, and to hear from my colleagues working in UN agencies, whom I salute for their efforts, and who spare no effort, in cooperation with civil society organizations to provide hope to those who only a few years ago had no hope. This is Iraq's message to the world, and this is our message through our visit today.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that rehabilitation and reintegration support, including legal assistance to access civil documentation, mental health and psychosocial support, education, health, economic empowerment and decent livelihoods programs to strengthen life-skills, and efforts to reconnect returnees with their families and communities, are some of the services the Centre offers.

I would also like to stress the importance of the repatriation process to the homeland. A homeland that accommodates all and forgives, given the regional instability and the hardship Al-Hol residents are facing. This urgency is especially critical for vulnerable groups like unaccompanied children, women survivors of violence, and victims of trafficking.

The United Nations will remain deeply committed to supporting Iraq in its efforts in the reintegration process and addressing the multifaceted needs of returnees, including physical and mental health support, vocational training, and access to quality education and employment opportunities. Furthermore, we are working closely with the Iraqi Government and international partners to enhance the capacity of local institutions, ensure better coordination on the ground, and ensure that the voices of affected communities are heard and acted upon.

While considerable progress has been made, there is definitely still a long

way to go; many challenges remain, and we must ensure that our efforts are sustainable and intensified to keep up with the high numbers of returns. We look forward to the return of all Iraqis outside the country, specifically those in Al-Hol camp.

Jedaa is just the beginning, not the end. The situation might not be perfect, nor do we aim for perfection, but if there are cases of mistreatment that are contrary to the law and international law, we are confident that the pertinent authorities in this dear country will thoroughly investigate and act upon them in a swift and transparent manner, taking all necessary measures to prevent their occurrence or repetition. We in the United Nations are diligently following up on all these issues, in coordination with the concerned Iraqi authorities to prevent their occurrence. Even if these are isolated cases, they are still unacceptable and not befitting of Iraq, nor are they acceptable by Iraq. Anyone who has lived in fear for years should not be subjected to any additional hardship. We owe it to them to ensure that they are safe, and we have great and steadfast confidence in Iraq and the Iraqi Government. I reiterate that the international community is committed to remaining engaged and supportive, alongside the Government of Iraq, as we continue working together to provide meaningful solutions and a better future for the returnees. I mean all returnees, without exception.

I conclude by reiterating that the United Nations stands firmly and in a sustainable manner with the Government of Iraq in its sincere efforts to promote stability, peace, and recovery. Together, we can create an environment where all Iraqis can thrive and rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

Thank you."



UN Iraq SRSG calls for solutions to Yazidi IDP's difficult conditions and commends their resilience



Duhok, 20 November 2024 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr.

Mohamed Al Hassan, visited the Khanky Camp for Internally Displaced Persons from the Yazidi community in Duhok Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He toured the facility, met

with residents and with camp management to hear their concerns and needs, and to view the IDPs' living conditions. Yazidis have endured difficult living conditions in Khanky, a sea of white plastic canvas tents and makeshift structures, since they were forced to flee their homes in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate, during the onslaught of Da'esh/ISIL on the area in 2014. He also met with a number of Yazidi children who were born in these temporary camps, knowing no other place. Dr. Al Hassan called for urgent and swift action on this important humanitarian file. "These conditions should not continue. What is at stake is human lives. Such a situation should not continue." The SRSG stressed the international community's confidence in Iraq's ability to provide better care for all its people, especially those who have suffered from Da'esh's crimes.

Transforming lives through music for refugees in Iraq

Erbil, 21 November 2024 - In his music classroom, Nidal sits with his fingers delicately plucking the strings of a tamboura as he teaches a group of children to sing. The small room, filled with the sounds of melody and laughter, has become a sanctuary—a place of healing and hope, not just for the children but for Nidal himself.

"It's been 2.5 years now," Nidal shares, reflecting on his journey as a music teacher at a community centre in a refugee camp in Kurdistan. During this time, Nidal has encountered many children in the classroom who reminded him of his childhood—quiet, withdrawn, and searching for something to hold on to. Understanding those feelings all too well, he gives his full attention to his class, determined to offer his students the solace and strength he once sought through music. Nidal's life began in Damascus, Syria, where childhood dreams were interrupted by the eruption of conflict in 2011. Forced to flee with his family, Nidal sought safety in Kurdistan. The

journey, however, was fraught with danger and left a profound mark on him. "I saw death with my own eyes," he recounts, describing the gunfire-filled streets and children younger than him holding weapons. At only 11 years old, Nidal arrived in Kurdistan with his family, searching for refuge and a chance to rebuild their lives.

The family eventually found safety in Domiz one refugee camp in Kurdistan. But safety didn't mean life became easier. Adjusting to camp life, with its new challenges and limitations, was tough for Nidal. A new environment where he had to live in a tent and didn't have access to many services. Struggling with stress and trauma, he turned to unhealthy habits to cope.

"I wasn't in a good mental state," he recalls, but things slowly began to change when Nidal attended a music class at a community centre in the camp. "I tried other classes—computer skills and sports—but nothing felt right. When I sat in the music class and saw the teacher singing, I felt

something shift inside me," he says.

Inspired, Nidal decided to learn an instrument. He chose the tamboura, a traditional string instrument, and poured his energy into mastering it. It wasn't easy on him at first, but the more he practised, the more he felt the weight of stress lifting. Music became his escape and his therapy.

Nidal's passion for music quickly spread to his family. His father, a poet, encouraged his journey while his brothers picked up instruments of their own. "Music became a family affair," he says with a smile.

After years of dedication, Nidal's love for music transformed into something even more meaningful when he began teaching music at the same centre where he had once found solace. The community centre, operated by UNHCR and its partner the Lotus Flower, in collaboration with Nudem, a small community-based organization, offers projects that empower refugees to learn, grow, and work toward self-reliance while addressing their challenges. Nidal quickly became one of their most valued staff members.

For Nidal, teaching isn't just about music—it's about creating a safe space where children can heal and thrive. In many cases, kids stay late after class or come early. Nidal explains how he is always willing to teach them, no matter the hour, because he knows they're trying to escape something, just like he used to.

"Sometimes, a child will come to me shy



Transforming lives through music for refugees in Iraq *(continued)*

and unsure, but after a few months of learning, they're like a different person—happier, more confident. That's what keeps me going," he says. Nidal playing the tamboura and singing along with his class. Despite the demands of teaching, Nidal

hasn't given up on his own dreams. He hopes to pursue a university education, a goal that has been delayed due to financial constraints. Nidal believes in the ripple effect of his work. "One of my students might become a famous musician someday," he says with pride.

"Even if they don't, I know they'll carry the lessons they've learned here with them for life."

Lilly Carlisle contributed reporting to this story.
By Hamzeh Almomani, UNHCR



Karbala, 28 November 2024 - During his Karbala mission, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, accompanied by UNHCR Iraq Representative, met Governor **Nassif Jassim Al-Khattabi**, praising local efforts to support Lebanese arrivals. They also visited Madinat Sayyed Al-Awsiya to meet members of the Lebanese community.



Karbala, 28 November 2024 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, met with His Eminence **Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al-Kerbala'e** at the Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala. They discussed the situation of Lebanese Guests in Iraq and the humanitarian assistance provided by the Shrine to support them.

American diplomats visit Essian and Khanke camps for displaced Iraqis

Erbil, 28 November 2024 – On 15 November, during his visit to Essian camp for displaced Iraqis, the US Consul General, Steve Bitner, spoke with Ezidis youth who voiced their concerns about the conditions in the camp and the ongoing insecurity in their hometown Sinjar. They highlighted access to education and jobs as critical for becoming more self-reliant. Consul General Bitner emphasised the importance of addressing the causes of displacement and supporting youth to build a better future.



UNHCR thanks the United States for standing with refugees and displaced persons in Iraq.

This Thanksgiving, UNHCR is grateful for the generous and flexible contributions of the United States government and people to help forcibly displaced populations in Iraq. Together with the representatives of the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil, we visited Khanke IDP camp in Dohuk and met with displaced women and families to hear their challenges and future plans.

In Iraq, UNHCR works with partners to help refugees navigate legal complexities

Baghdad, 10 December 2024 - When Abu Faisal's family's ID documents expired, UNHCR stepped in to support. As a Syrian refugee, he had to update his UNHCR refugee certificate and certify his marriage before being able to renew his Iraqi residency documents, including for his children.

In Iraq, UNHCR works with partners like @terredeshommesitaliairaq to help refugees navigate legal complexities.

Through these efforts, Abu Faisal was able to legally prove his children were his—and his two sons finally enrolled in school, ready to chase their dreams.

This year, more than 13,000 refugees have received legal assistance in Iraq from UNHCR and our partners.

This is more than paperwork—it's about opening doors to brighter futures. "It has been two years since I arrived in Diyala, Iraq. This certificate has granted me access to public services and provided me with a sense of security. That's why I am here today to renew it," said Abdulhameed, a 47 year

old Syrian refugee.

UNHCR supported the registration of 324 Syrian refugees in Diyala Governorate during its recent visit to the governorate.

Registration is the first step to ensuring refugees and asylum-seekers can access essential services, and have protection.

"This is the long-awaited day. I finally hold the documents I need to prove who I am" says the Iraqi displaced Iraqi Yazidi, Gule, standing with her nephews, Majid and Adkan, proudly holding their renewed documents.

In the past five years, UNHCR and partners have helped issue over



233,000 civil documents and provided legal aid to 244,000 people like Gule.

For displaced Iraqis, missing documents means restricted access to education, healthcare, and basic rights. These renewed documents are more than papers—they are a lifeline.

Using age determination to secure identity and civil documentation

Anbar, 12 December 2024 - Four workstations in a corner office at the Nazal health centre in Fallujah are ready to receive their first applicants. A red ribbon and mint green signs are the only markings for this newly established age determination committee, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, and the Government of France. This committee will open doors to a new life for thousands of Iraqis in Fallujah, 65 km away from the capital, and offer critical services that were previously out of reach for families displaced by the conflict with Daesh.

The nearest centre that provides similar services is 70km away in Ramadi and not easily accessible to families in Fallujah, Saqlawiyah, A'meriyat and Garma, who returned home after years of displacement. For many, essential legal documents such as birth and marriage certificates were lost or not issued during displacement and securing them requires an initial step: determining the applicant's age.

"Establishing an age determination committee in Fallujah will make life much easier for many families," shares Dr. Ahmed Salem Sameet, Director of the Primary Health Care Sector in Fallujah, affiliated with the Anbar Health Directorate. "Right now, they

have to take long, expensive, and often risky trips to Ramadi to access this service. Having the committee closer to home will save time, reduce costs, and help communities in Fallujah and nearby areas get the support they need more quickly".

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, with support from the Government of France, and in close coordination with local authorities in Anbar, established this new age determination committee to support returnees and displaced persons to address critical gaps in securing identity and civil documentation.

"We thank IOM for its close coordination with the Iraqi authorities to provide internally displaced persons with civil documentation," shares

Patrick Durel, Ambassador of France to Iraq. "The new centre in Fallujah will facilitate the process to obtain the needed documents and ultimately contribute to a lasting return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin. France has consistently supported Iraq to face the consequences of the conflicts and crises it had to deal with and will continue to do so".

The age determination committee, consisting of three medical specialists is the first of its kind in the city that will support roughly 50,000 Iraqis to secure identity and civil documents. A typical examination consists of building a full medical history and examination of dental, skeletal x-rays and physical development, which is corroborated with family history and displacement



Using age determination to secure identity and civil documentation (continued)

data. The final results provide a near-accurate date of birth that is used to create the birth certificate and other national identification documents.

“The documents issued by the centre are the building blocks for the future of Iraq,” shares Giorgi Gigauri, Chief of Mission for IOM Iraq. “Access to education and future development opportunities start with securing the right documents through the age determination committee”.

Age determination certificates are prerequisites for many other legal documents, such as birth certificates, which adversely affect children’s enrollment in schools and their subsequent development. Access to identity and civil documents are a fundamental right and are required to exercise freedom of movement, access

to healthcare, education, housing, land and property rights, as well as social protection mechanisms. In the past, traveling to the centre in Ramadi incurred high costs for families living in the outskirts of the governorate, as the process requires multiple visits and overnight stays. This was especially difficult for female-headed households, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.

This initiative is part of IOM’s broader legal assistance programme, which seeks to address systemic barriers to access to identity and civil documents. Complicated registration processes, high costs, repeated follow up visits, and institutional inaccessibility have historically hindered displaced persons and returnees from obtaining these documents. IOM’s efforts include

providing legal services, engaging government stakeholders, and strengthening the capacity of authorities, community-based groups, and civil society organizations. Similar age determination centres and committees have been set up in the governorates of Ninewa and Salah Din. The establishment of the Fallujah committee is a culmination of nearly one year of intensive coordination and advocacy with the Anbar governorate’s organizations affairs department, the joint coordination and monitoring center (JCMC), and the directorate of health in Al-Anbar. These collaborative efforts highlight IOM’s and the Government of Iraq’s shared vision to support the people of Iraq to secure durable solutions, leaving no one behind.

Benvenuti a Baherka!

Erbil, 11 December 2024 - Last week Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - Jordan and Iraq - AICS Amman visited Baherka Registration and Protection Centre where UNHCR and partners register and provide protection services to asylum-seekers in Erbil governorate.

The delegation also met with two vulnerable Syrian families who receive cash assistance from UNHCR to help them pay rent, buy food and meet other basic needs.



Education and family support can help protect children's rights!

Sulaymaniyah/Dohuk, 17 December 2024 - In Sulaymaniyah, UNHCR and partner INTERSOS organized awareness sessions on children’s rights, with the participation of over 1,000 refugee and Iraqi host community children

The children shared their thoughts on the importance of education and family support in ensuring their safety, security, and future opportunities.

In Duhok, refugee child protection volunteers - trained by UNHCR & The Lotus Flower- - recently stepped into

new roles with the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (DOLSA).

Together they will help identify vulnerable children in their communities and ensure they are referred to appropriate services and support.



UNAMI DSO on X

Mosul, 06 November 2024 - UNAMI's Development Support Office in Mosul, in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Oxfam, and the Global Center for Social Services, hosted a roundtable discussion on Ninawa's Vision 2030—one of Iraq's first provincial visions aligned with 70% of the Sustainable Development Goals.



DSRSG/RC/HC Ghulam Isaczai: “Iraq’s NDP aims to advance the country towards achieving the SDGs”

Erbil, 09 November 2024 - The Government of Iraq's National Development Plan, supported by the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2025-29), aims to advance the country towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which are crucial for Iraq's future prosperity. The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, outlines the challenges posed by decades of conflict and highlights the opportunities for progress through the UN Country Team's engagement and support for Iraq, in an exclusive interview with Rudaw.

DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai says: "Water scarcity and climate change are critical



issues in Iraq, and the United Nations is fully committed to supporting the Iraqi government in its mitigation efforts to reduce the adverse impacts of these challenges," as he speaks candidly about the environmental

crisis, its potential dangers for Iraq's future, and ways to lessen its impact. You can access the Rudaw Media Network video of the interview at: <https://www.facebook.com/UnitedNationsIraq/videos/826779242745733>

USAID commits investment of up to \$20 Million with UNICEF to address water scarcity in Iraq and improve water and sanitation services

Baghdad, 25 November 2024 — USAID has announced a landmark investment of up to \$20 million over the next four years, marking the first-ever commitment of this scale to enhance water and sanitation services in Iraq. Through this funding, UNICEF, under the leadership of the Government of Iraq, will scale up transformative interventions across five governorates, including Maysan, Diwaniyah, Ninewa, Baghdad, and Erbil, to improve water and sanitation services for 2.5 million people, including vulnerable populations.

"This program aligns with the Government of Iraq's national three-year cost plan," said Mr. Ali Hussein Abdul Amir, Deputy Minister of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Work. "We highly value our partnership with UNICEF, and USAID's support will play a key role in

advancing our goal of inclusive access to sustainable water and sanitation services."

The funding will enhance local capacity to ensure equitable access to essential water and sanitation services. It will also strengthen the capabilities of Iraqi government partners to provide universal access to safe, inclusive, equitable distribution of water and build trust among youth and urban and rural inhabitants in the services offered.

Erin Mone-Marquez, USAID/Iraq Acting Mission Director, added, "we're proud to collaborate with UNICEF and the Government of Iraq to scale national water and sanitation services at the governorate level. By working together with local communities and partners, we are collectively taking the necessary and important steps toward ensuring a healthier, more sustainable

future for all Iraqis."

The initiative will focus on strengthening water sector



USAID commits investment of up to \$20 Million with UNICEF to address water scarcity in Iraq ... (continued)

management, modernising service delivery, and increasing private sector and community engagement, particularly engaging youth, who constitute nearly 60 per cent of the Iraqi population.

“Under the leadership of the Government of Iraq and in partnership with USAID, this transformative

initiative will accelerate progress to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,” said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. “It will drive critical improvements in water systems, ensure a sustainable environment, and empower communities, especially children and young people, to drive climate action.”

The program will promote sustainable behaviour change by enhancing knowledge, attitudes, and practices within communities. It will also safeguard youth from the impacts of climate change, empowering them to take leadership roles in climate action.

Toyota Iraq joins UN-Habitat to enhance living conditions in the Japan Village Project



Erbil, 28 November 2024 - UN-Habitat Iraq and Toyota Iraq formalised a new partnership during a signing ceremony at Toyota Iraq’s office in Erbil. The newly launched initiative aims to enhance infrastructure and living standards for approximately 9,000 residents of the Japan Village and surrounding neighbourhoods in Mosul. The project includes the installation of solar streetlights and the construction of a multi-purpose sports court, promoting safety, community engagement, and environmentally friendly solutions.

Toyota Iraq pledged its commitment to adopt specific components of the Japan Village Project, including the installation of 32 solar streetlights along the main streets of the complex and the construction of a multi-purpose sports court for recreational and community activities.

Mr. Tanimoto Tadashi, Toyota Iraq CEO, expressed great pride in supporting a transformative project that strengthens sustainable development and boosts community resilience. Focused on improving public space access, particularly for women and children, the project promotes environmental sustainability and community well-being. In his words, “Toyota Iraq is dedicated to driving

positive change through initiatives that build a greener, brighter future for all.” The Japan Village Project, funded by the Government of Japan, supports the Mosul Master Plan to develop that strategic area to accommodate returnees and reintegrate displaced families. It provides not only housing solutions but also workforce training in sustainable construction practices and climate resilience strategies, resulting in durable solutions and long-term development.

Upon completion, the management of the multi-purpose court and maintenance of the solar streetlights will be handed over to the local the local authorities. Representing the Ninewa governorate, Mr. Ahmed Younis, Assistant Governor for Planning, emphasised Toyota Iraq’s valuable contribution to the project. He stated, “The Ninewa Governorate appreciates Toyota’s investment in improving the quality of life for the people of Mosul. This sets a strong example of how the private sector can partner to support development initiatives like the Japan Village Project. We are committed to maintaining this initiative and will explore ways to replicate the implementation of solar streetlighting and sports facilities in other areas of

the governorate.”

The improvements funded by Toyota Iraq align with UN-Habitat’s New Urban Agenda principles, which promote safe, inclusive, and accessible public spaces. These spaces encourage social interaction, economic activity, and cultural expression while advancing sustainable urban development in Mosul and Ninewa.

In the opportunity, Mr. Muslim Qazimi, Head of the UN-Habitat Iraq Country Programme, said: “UN-Habitat welcomes Toyota Iraq’s contributions and this first engagement by Japanese private sector companies in our efforts to build inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. This collaboration sets a precedent for future partnerships, encouraging private sector involvement in urban recovery and development initiatives in Iraq.”

The collaboration between Toyota Iraq and UN-Habitat Iraq under the project “Enhancing Sustainable Development and Community Resilience in Post-Conflict Areas – Complementary Components for the Japan Village Project” represents a pioneering step in engaging the Japanese private sector in UN-Habitat’s urban recovery efforts in Iraq.



BEIT project set to drive decent work and affordable housing in Iraq

The project's first Steering Committee meeting reviewed initial progress and planned 2025 activities. The initiative promotes decent work and affordable housing in Iraq, focusing on equitable access and support for marginalized communities, with funding from the EU.

Baghdad, 27 November 2024 – (ILO News) The Ministry of Planning (MoP), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN-Habitat, and the International Trade Centre (ITC), hosted the first Steering Committee Meeting of the Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT) Towards Decent Work and Affordable Housing in Iraq project, funded by the European Union (EU).

The BEIT initiative promotes inclusive economic growth by creating decent work opportunities and improving access to affordable housing across Iraq. It aligns with Iraq's national development strategies, addressing pressing challenges such as unemployment and housing shortages. During the meeting, stakeholders reviewed progress achieved during the inception phase and discussed plans for 2025 implementation.

During his speech, Dr. Mohamed Mohsen Al Sayed, the Director General of Local and Regional Development Directorate, at the Ministry of Planning, stated: "This project is one of the fruits of Iraq's cooperation with the European Union and the United Nations Agencies, aligning with Iraqi priorities in the housing sector, job creation, and private sector development. The initiative will establish a scalable housing model, which will be piloted in Anbar and Mosul, where 200 units are planned for construction. Additionally, the technical cooperation will focus on capacity-building interventions across various aspects and contribute to the development of a national housing policy, informed by the positive indicators emerging from the population and housing census that was recently implemented."

Lennart Derrider, Head of Cooperation for the EU Delegation to Iraq, highlighted the EU's support, saying: "The project has taken concrete steps to uphold decent work standards and tackle child labour. It is laying the groundwork for the development of a National Housing Policy and is strengthening Iraq's business eco-system in the construction sector."



The country representatives of the three implementing UN agencies, Mr. Muslim Qazimi (UN-Habitat), Mr. Eric Buchot (ITC), and Dr. Maha Kattaa (ILO), gave an overview of progress to date, and presented the planned next steps for the Steering Committee's approval. They jointly emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts, highlighting the commitment of UN-HABITAT, ITC and ILO to the project's multi-disciplinary and inclusive approach in technical support and technical assistance, as well as the commitment to tackling Iraq's housing shortage while creating meaningful employment opportunities through private sector engagement and the empowerment of SMEs.

They underscored the need for collaboration during the pilot phase in providing affordable green housing, enhancing trade performance and fostering job creation. It was anticipated that the Project Steering Committee would ensure strategic alignment to deliver affordable, impactful, sustainable eco-friendly solutions that integrate policy, trade facilitation, investment mobilization, and climate-resilient housing development with decent green jobs. Project Managers from the three agencies then provided detailed updates on the project's achievements so far.

BEIT partners provided insights into progress made during the inception phase and outlined collaborative strategies planned for 2025. Key elements of progress in 2024 included:

- commencement of the development of an updated national housing policy
- commenced design of green affordable housing units
- established a technical working group with international housing finance experts
- continued road map process for establishment of a national public works programme

- initiated labour governance reforms addressing child labour, inclusiveness, safe workplaces and dialogue among social partners
- capacity building for partners
- completed two construction market surveys on supply and demand sides
- established collaborations and partnerships
- commenced development of sustainable construction curriculum.

The project emphasizes collaboration across multiple sectors to ensure equitable access to employment and housing, focusing on vulnerable communities to promote inclusivity.

Questions were then taken from Steering Committee members, focusing on issues around the initiative's implementation strategies, ensuring equitable access, and addressing the specific needs of vulnerable communities. Attention was highlighted to supporting Iraq's marginalized and vulnerable populations, ensuring that the initiative fosters sustainable solutions for equitable economic growth.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from all partners to advance BEIT's objectives and ensure tangible outcomes for Iraq's communities in 2025 and beyond. Through BEIT, Iraq is taking a significant step toward building a more inclusive and sustainable future for its people.



UN-Habitat and HiiL launch the Iraq Justice Innovation Initiative

Baghdad, 01 December 2024 - UN-Habitat and HiiL (The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law) celebrated their partnership at the Stories of Change event, launching the Iraq Justice Innovation Initiative. Implemented by four national NGOs, the project supports displaced and returnees'

communities, particularly women and minorities, by addressing Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) challenges through innovative solutions.

UN-Habitat commended the initiative for improving HLP rights literacy and established referral mechanisms, ensuring that individuals reached

through the initiative can access further assistance from UN-Habitat for HLP claims, compensation processes, and the issuance of land certificates.

NGOs were also invited to participate in 2025 policy dialogues, under two major initiatives: Modernizing Urban Land Knowledge (MULK): Transitioning to E-land Governance in Iraq (EU-funded) and the Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights (funded by the Government of the Netherlands). These efforts aim to modernise land governance and secure tenure rights across Iraq.

The partnership reinforces UN-Habitat's commitment to equitable land access, sustainable development, and justice for all.



UN Country Team discusses its priorities and plans for 2025 in support of Iraq's priorities and SDGs

Basra, 02 December 2024 - A two-day UN Country Team Retreat under leadership of Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczi, concluded in Basra today. Representatives of 20 UN agencies discussed their priorities and plans for 2025 in support of national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (#SDGs).



The Turning point: Iraq's leap into the digital economy

Baghdad, 03 December 2024 - In a world increasingly defined by digital finance, Iraq has taken a transformative step with the Digital Payment Regulation No.2 of 2024. This landmark policy marks more than just regulatory progress; it signifies a realignment of Iraq's financial infrastructure with global standards. Aimed at reducing the country's overreliance on cash, this move fosters greater financial inclusion and economic transparency, hinting at a future of resilience and innovation within Iraq's financial sector.

Beyond Compliance: A Shift Towards Better Financial Inclusion

The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) has set a clear direction: digital payments are now an essential part of Iraq's economic future. With funding from the United States Agency for International



Development (USAID) in Iraq, and support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Iraq,

this regulation is a catalyst for ensuring that digital transactions are accessible not only to urban business

The Turning point: Iraq's leap into the digital economy *(continued)*

hubs but also across diverse sectors, bridging public and private financial landscapes. Iraq's transition to digital payments will unlock a range of economic benefits, including streamlined operations, enhanced data visibility, and improved financial security.

"The collected amount from the digital payment reaches (7.6 Trillion Iraqi Dinars), after it was (2.6 Trillion Iraqi Dinar) in January, 2023"- Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, Prime Minister of Iraq. Currently, Iraq's cash-dependent economy presents significant challenges for financial circulation and transparency. The new Digital Payment Regulation disrupts this status quo, incentivizing businesses to adopt tools like POS systems, e-wallets, and online gateways. As the nation embraces this evolution, UNDP Iraq continues to support the government in developing a legal framework aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international best practices.

"Iraq now possesses advanced infrastructure capable of accommodating electronic payment tools and financial services. We will soon transition to digital banks, where smartphones will drive various banking operations. This shift will facilitate financial accessibility of services for citizens, reduce opportunities for corruption and fraud, and provide crucial data at the national level regarding the nature of transactions, their content, oversight, and compliance achieved through this comprehensive system." Ali Al-Alaq, Governor of Central Bank of Iraq. UNDP's Strategic Role in Laying the Foundation

UNDP's contribution extends beyond technical support to a strategic partnership designed to foster Iraq's digital financial ecosystem. By working closely with the CBI, UNDP provided the technical expertise needed to craft policies that enable the shift to a digitally driven economy while safeguarding inclusivity and sustainability. This partnership highlights how collaborative, forward-thinking strategies can drive lasting structural change in emerging markets. "This regulation is more than a technical leap forward; it is a foundational shift towards economic resilience, inclusion, and transparency in Iraq. By modernizing the financial system, we are opening pathways for every Iraqi to engage fully in the economy and contribute to a stable and innovative future." Auke Lootsma, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative.

"USAID is proud to support Iraq's journey towards digital finance as part of our commitment to fostering sustainable development and economic opportunity. This regulation reflects Iraq's determination to build an economy that's inclusive, resilient, and aligned with the needs of its people. We are honored to be a part of this transformative chapter in Iraq's financial history," said Erin Mone-Marquez, USAID/Iraq's Acting Mission Director.

A Glimpse into the Future: Implications for Iraq's Economy
The impact of this regulation reaches far beyond mere compliance:

Strengthened Financial Governance: Reducing cash dependency minimizes risks of money laundering and corruption, creating a transparent transaction trail and fostering

accountability across public and private sectors.

Increased Economic Resilience and Investment Potential: By modernizing its financial system, Iraq becomes a more attractive market for foreign investors and opens doors for collaboration with global FinTech firms.

Support for SMEs and Innovation Hubs: Cashless systems reduce operational barriers for startups and small businesses, empowering entrepreneurship and enabling Iraq's talent to flourish.

More than a Policy Shift: A Cultural Transformation

Moving towards digital payments represents a profound cultural shift in Iraq, where cash-based transactions have long been the norm. Similar transitions in countries like India have underscored that this change is not just technical; it requires a transformation in public behavior and trust. Iraq's journey towards digital adoption will depend on clear vision from its leaders and cohesive efforts from regulators, businesses, and consumers alike.

This regulation is a pivotal milestone in Iraq's journey towards building a financially inclusive, transparent, and resilient economy. With the Central Bank leading, UNDP's technical advisory, and USAID's support, Iraq is positioned to create a robust digital economy. The path forward will require the collective commitment of all stakeholders to drive adoption and overcome challenges. If Iraq fully embraces this opportunity, it could emerge as a model for how thoughtful policy and collaboration can fast-track a nation into the digital age, unlocking vast potential for years to come.

Japan – UNIDO safety and hygiene training brings businesses back to Nineveh, Iraq, for the whole country's benefit

Baghdad, 03 December 2024 - Amidst the challenging times when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) took over the Nineveh Plains of Iraq in

2014

Hassan Salam and his family, like many Yazidis, were forced to leave everything behind and seek safety at a

displacement camp. They left behind their thriving factory dedicated to pickling and olive production, starting anew after the turmoil.

Despite enduring the difficulties of displacement, Hassan and his family's resilient entrepreneurial spirit persisted. Hassan said, "We worked in pickling on a simple and small scale and over time, we expanded the business and hired 10 people to work for us."

Upon returning to their hometown of Bartella in 2017, they discovered their factory had been looted and damaged, a fate shared by many businesses in the



Japan – UNIDO safety and hygiene training ... (continued)

area. Undeterred, they started over using limited resources. “When we returned after the liberation, we only found the factory building structure, so we had to start working again, even with simple means.”

With a degree and background in management, Hassan made it his goal to help the family secure everything they needed to rebuild their business. “In our work, we need many machines to reach the final product, including cutting machines, and machines for sorting olives or vegetables according to size.”

Hassan was eager to acquire the necessary equipment to revive their business. Their dedication attracted the attention of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which has been dedicated to supporting the economic recovery of Nineveh's returning citizens through a food safety and hygiene training programme, funded by the Japanese government. The programme aimed to empower local businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs, offering expertise in workplace safety, hygiene, and marketing strategies, catering to a range of locally produced foods. The training programme was versatile enough to apply to a wide spectrum of locally produced foods, including wheat and dairy products, tahini, olive oil, and pastries.

Hassan eagerly took part in the

programme, as it was held in Bartella, his hometown. The insights gained aligned with his goal of revitalizing the family business, which is now his full-time occupation. He said, “I was very happy when the local government in the area contacted me to register for the training. In addition to important information about hygiene and safety in the workplace, there are also methods of preserving and marketing the product.”

One pivotal aspect of the programme was securing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) certification. The internationally recognized certification is essential for maintaining food safety, ensuring regulatory compliance, and protecting both consumers and businesses. The certification enhanced his and his team's awareness of contamination risks and provided confidence during routine inspections by authorities. “Some customers would like to purchase directly from the factory, and it is very important that they see the process of production and the cleanliness of the process line and the practices of the workers. We now feel more confident when we are inspected routinely by the authorities.”

Nineveh was once considered the breadbasket of Iraq, given its fertile land and history of abundant agriculture production. Positioning his factory as a contributor to Iraq's food

ecosystem and economic growth, Hassan emphasized their collaboration with local farmers, acquiring raw materials and uplifting neighbouring communities: “We acquire our raw vegetables and olives from local farmers and pickle them in several stages. We are happy to assist the local farmers who supply us, mostly from the neighbouring communities.”

Japan and UNIDO further supported Hassan's factory by providing essential machinery, streamlining processes and enhancing efficiency, such as a laser printing device for expiration date labels. “Previously, we used to put the expiration date on the plastic containers manually, and this took time and effort, especially when we had an urgent order in large quantities. The device makes the process fast.”

Hassan, a newlywed, is committed to expanding their market outreach, with aspirations to eventually export products to neighbouring countries. His dedication, combined with the support from Japan and UNIDO, paints a hopeful picture for revitalizing economic prosperity in the region: “The local market is not the only goal. Although we are reaching several governorates such as Nineveh, Erbil, Duhok and Kirkuk, we hope to reach the whole country. We also aspire to export products to neighbouring countries.”

Progress in Basra's informal settlements spotlighted: offering inspiration for sustainable urban development in Iraq

Basra, 04 December 2024 - The 4th Steering Committee Meeting of the 4.5-year project, “Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Populations in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis,” funded by the European Union, was held in Basra. The meeting highlighted significant achievements in informal settlements, shared lessons learned, and established standards for replicable good practices across Iraq. Implemented by UN-Habitat in collaboration with local partners and the Basra Governorate, the project has already delivered 90% of its planned objectives, significantly transforming the lives of residents in Kubiya, Al Ahrar, and Jurf Al Melah informal settlements.

The project began in 2021 under challenging circumstances, as part of the European Union's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq. Its initial

focus was to improve basic living conditions for vulnerable populations, ensuring they could survive the pandemic and recover from its socio-economic impacts. Mr. David Healy, Deputy Ambassador and Head of Political Section of the EU Delegation to Iraq, reflected, “This project started in an emergency context, integrating the European Union's efforts to address the COVID-19 crisis in Iraq, helping people and places respond to the challenges imposed by the pandemic and strengthening their capacity to recover. To witness so many improvements since 2021 gives us certainty that Basra has today the capacity to develop better than it had before the pandemic. It serves as an example for all of Iraq on how sustainable urban development, socio-economic recovery, and improved management capacities can be effectively integrated.”

In the past nine months alone, critical investments in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure have directly improved living conditions for 20,790 residents. The provision of reliable clean water and sanitation facilities, coupled with the ongoing construction of 7.55 km of roads, has enhanced connectivity to services and reduced chronic issues such as flooding with sewage water. Residents in these areas have reliable drinking water supply and protection from seasonal flooding that once disrupted daily life.

A notable achievement underlined at the meeting was the development of the Basra GeoPortal Platform, a cutting-edge data tool that maps underserved areas and guides evidence-based urban planning. Local authorities now rely on the platform to prioritise interventions in informal settlements effectively. Mr. Haider Toama, Mayor of Shatt Al Arab district, lauded the initiative, saying,

Progress in Basra's informal settlements spotlighted ... (continued)

“Tailored solutions like this demonstrate how informed planning can immediately benefit residents and create a roadmap for good governance across Iraq. It brings us pride to know that Basra now occupies this leading position. We are committed to collaborating with all means available to ensure that the benefits of this initiative are sustained for the long term.”

The meeting also reviewed the project's legislative impact. High-level policy dialogues have catalysed the drafting of a National Law on Informal Settlements in Iraq, aimed at formalising access to basic rights and urban services for vulnerable populations. Once enacted, this law promises to extend Basra's progress into a nationwide model for equitable urban development.

Mr Muslim Qazimi, Head of the UN-Habitat Iraq Programme, reflected on the project's far-reaching implications: “Thanks to EU support and strong collaboration with Basra authorities, we are not only solving immediate challenges but also creating systems that ensure sustainable urban development, making sure no one and no place is left behind. Basra's achievements inspire the potential for national transformation. Together, we aim to address the challenges of sustainable urban planning, improve environmental conditions, and enhance

services for Basra's underserved neighbourhoods, especially in informal settlements.”

Equally transformative are the project's vocational training programmes, developed in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Six hundred unemployed men and women have been trained in skills such as sustainable construction techniques, solar energy maintenance, and waste management. These competencies meet local labour market demands while promoting climate-resilient practices, creating better opportunities for long-term employment and environmentally friendly practices.

Ms Maha Kattaa, Head of ILO's Iraq Country Programme, noted, “This initiative equips individuals with skills to not only secure livelihoods but also to lead sustainable change. The

implementation of the ‘Procedures Manual for Employment Departments’ in Basra showcases a replicable framework for employment services that can strengthen labour markets across Iraq.”

The meeting concluded with an announcement of a milestone celebration: the opening of Al Ghadeer Park in Jurf Al Melah on 5 December. The park will serve as a community hub, reflecting the project's emphasis on creating inclusive and sustainable urban public spaces that promote health and well-being.

As the project moves towards its completion in June 2025, the progress shared at the meeting underscores the potential for innovative, collaborative approaches to address urban challenges across Iraq, leveraging Basra's experience as a role model for urban sustainable development.



Activism beyond Sinjar

Baghdad, 06 December 2024 - Open Space Dialogue activists met national, international, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq-UNAMI and civil society partners in Baghdad to champion the needs of the people of Sinjar.

“There are a lot of athletes and sports enthusiasts in Sinjar, and we aim to support them by creating sports programmes and activities for the youth, including organizing tournaments, providing logistical support, and building new sport arenas and stadiums”, said Dr. Najim Mutasher, Director of Sports Activities Department, Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports.

“We are here to advocate for solutions to the reconstruction challenges in Sinjar, working in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders and government representatives”, stated Turkiye Shamo, Member of Sinjar

Open Space Dialogue.

“The Yazidi community in Sinjar has endured immense suffering, and supporting them remains a top priority. We are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring they regain their rightful entitlements and receive the compensation they deserve”, says Dr.

Sajad Hussein Alhasnawi, Director General of the Health and Social Department at the Martyrs Foundation.

This activity was facilitated by IOM and with funding from the German Government.



UN-Habitat, the European Union, and Basra Authorities celebrate the opening of Al Ghadeer Park in Basra City

Basra, 05 December 2024 - UN-Habitat, in partnership with the European Union and local authorities, hosted a ceremony to mark the official opening of Al Ghadeer Park in Jurf Al Melah, Basra. The park is a key achievement of the project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Populations in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis", which aims to upgrade urban infrastructure in informal settlements, improve the quality of life for residents, enhance access to decent work, and deliver sustainable urban solutions.

The ceremony commenced with opening remarks from Mr Haider Adnan Hussein, on behalf of the Shatt Al-Arab District; Mr Louay Mohammed Jassim, principal of Al Shaheed Ali Ali Mansouri Primary School; and Mr Juan Valle Robles, UN-Habitat Iraq Project Manager. The programme included a performance by students from Jurf Al Melah, specially prepared for the occasion, reflecting their appreciation for the newly inaugurated park, and the distribution of certificates of honour to individuals and organisations whose efforts were instrumental in its construction, completion, and future management.

During his speech, Mr Haider Adnan Hussein emphasised the park's importance: "The people of Shatt Al-Arab District deserve a space where they can gather, enjoy quality time, and build strong connections. This park reflects their aspirations for a better community. Through our close collaboration with UN-Habitat and the European Union, we turned their wishes into reality. I am confident that everyone, including Shatt Al-Arab

District management, will take good care of this park and treat it as an extension of their own home."

About Al Ghadeer Park

The agenda also included a symbolic ribbon-cutting, a tree-planting activity, the unveiling of a commemorative plaque, and a guided tour through the park's facilities. Spanning 12,000 square metres, the park features a football pitch, gym area, children's playground, family gazebos, seating areas, solar-powered lighting, and 1,700 newly planted trees—all tailored to Basra's challenging climate.

The park's development involved extensive community consultations, ensuring it meets the needs of both informal and formal settlers. It also provided unemployed youth with vocational training and on-the-job learning, equipping them with skills, securing job opportunities, and allowing them to directly contribute to improving their community.

In his opening remarks, Mr Juan Valle Robles highlighted the park's broader significance:

"UN-Habitat is deeply committed, under its mandate, to upgrading Basra's most vulnerable neighbourhoods through sustainable urban development and planning. Our efforts focus on creating more public and green spaces, enhancing essential urban services, and uplifting the quality of life for all residents. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated partnership of the Basra Governorate, the Directorates, and Shatt Al-Arab District."

Sustainability was prioritised with the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies, such as solar lighting poles and drip irrigation systems,

addressing the region's endemic water scarcity and environmental challenges.

A Shared Vision for the Future

According to Mr Louay Mohammed Jassim, principal of Al Shaheed Ali Ali Mansouri Primary School, this is the first time the community of Jurf Al Melah will have access to a green public space that can be integrated into their daily lives:

"We are about to witness a tremendous improvement in the community's quality of life. Our school is committed to making the best use of the park as an extension of our school. It will provide a space for physical enrichment activities, environmentally friendly practices, mental health initiatives, and teaching the children to care for shared spaces. They will set an example and inspire their families."

Collaborating with partners, UN-Habitat demonstrates how innovative, community-led approaches and scalable catalytic pilots can transform public spaces, strengthen communities, and shift mindsets.

Public spaces like Al Ghadeer Park optimise urban development by creating the conditions for safer and more cohesive communities, reducing spatial inequalities, stimulating local economies, reintegrating nature into urban settings, and ultimately leaving no one and no place behind.



UN-Habitat and Iraq's Ministry of Planning lead policy dialogue on the roadmap for rehabilitation of informal settlements in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 December 2024 - UN-Habitat, in collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Planning, organised a policy dialogue in Baghdad to discuss strategies for implementing the Roadmap of the National Programme for the Rehabilitation and Regularisation of Informal Settlements. The dialogue brought together representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, key government ministries, the State of Council, governorates, the European Union, and

UN-Habitat to strengthen institutional frameworks and advance sustainable solutions for informal settlements across Iraq.

Dr. Maher Johan, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Planning, highlighted the dual challenges of addressing existing informal settlements and curbing future growth. "The informal settlement crisis has posed significant social, security, and environmental challenges since 2014. Although a roadmap was developed in 2012, the

COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for an updated plan. Addressing this issue is crucial for achieving sustainable urban planning through measures such as allocating financial resources, tackling internal displacement, enacting effective legislation, and mitigating social and economic challenges."

Building on the National Policy for Addressing Informal Settlements, endorsed in 2015, the initiative refines the framework to ensure effective

UN-Habitat and Iraq's Ministry of Planning lead policy dialogue on the roadmap for rehabilitation of informal settlements ... (continued)

implementation, with the aim of integrating sustainable solutions into Iraq's national development strategies. Funded by the European Union, the dialogue aligns with the project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Populations in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis."

Reflecting on the EU's role, Mr. Mauro Gioe, Programme Manager of Delegation to Iraq, connected the dialogue to the broader objectives of the project.

"Developing a comprehensive Informal Settlement Law is of key importance to address some of the challenges posed by a constantly growing young population. A new law will reinforce Iraq's paths towards a flourishing socio-economic development and will pave the way for more investment and job creation. The EU remains committed to support the Government's continuous efforts to maintain and strengthen a stable Iraq through social and economic development that aims also at reducing inequalities, promoting social cohesion, and increasing opportunities for the youth."

The Roadmap for Addressing Informal Settlements in Iraq is structured around four key frameworks: 1) Legal/Technical, 2) Financial, 3) Institutional/Administrative, and 4) Coordination.

These frameworks guide the strategic approach, detailing actions, timelines, and the roles of responsible entities. The policy dialogue followed this



structure to ensure targeted discussions.

Addressing the legal and technical perspective, Mr. Muslim Qazimi, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, stated, "This framework aims to understand the root causes of informal settlements and deliver tailored solutions to improve living conditions. Actions include mapping informal settlements, preparing feasibility studies for redevelopment, rehabilitation, or resettlement, and improving the quality of life for all Iraqis while promoting a sustainable urban future." Financing mechanisms emerged as a core aspect of the discussion. Mr. Ali Hussain Abdul Ameer, Deputy Minister of Construction, Housing, Municipalities, and Public Works, emphasised financial viability. "Rehabilitation and upgrading efforts must be reflected in budgets to ensure realistic implementation. Progress relies on enacting the draft Informal

Settlements Law and integrating funding into annual plans to prevent further urban encroachment and address the challenges posed by existing settlements."

The dialogue also highlighted institutional coordination to ensure the sustainability of the Roadmap. Key efforts focus on capacity building for pro-poor housing provisions, aligning with Iraq's National Housing Policy and National Poverty Reduction Strategy. Activities include land-use planning, resettlement, and participatory planning with community involvement.

This policy dialogue forms part of a broader series of efforts supported by the European Union to address informal settlements in Iraq. UN-Habitat remains committed to fostering collaboration, providing technical support, and building capacity to create resilient urban environments and sustainable development for all Iraqis.

International Labour Organization participates in Eighth International Arab Guarantees Conference in Baghdad

Baghdad, (ILO News) 18 December 2024 – In light of the National Lending Strategy that has recently been launched by the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI), the International Labour Organization (ILO) participated in the Eighth International Arab Guarantees Conference that was held in Iraq for the first time. The event saw the presence of the CBI, Arab guarantee entities, and Iraqi financial institutions.

The Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees extended invitations to Arab guarantee entities for this significant conference. The event featured a comprehensive presentation on the Iraqi Company for Bank



Guarantees, followed by sessions discussing the impact of credit guarantees on economic development and the integration of financial institutions and guarantee companies in conflict areas and innovations in

credit guarantee programs.

In his speech, Dr. Ammar Hamad Khalaf, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, emphasized the importance of the conference in promoting cooperation and achieving a

International Labour Organization participates in Eighth International Arab Guarantees Conference in Baghdad *(continued)*

comprehensive and sustainable vision of partnership in the banking sector. He highlighted that the development of the banking sector and the increase in credit availability depend on providing adequate guarantees for SMEs. Dr. Khalaf also revealed that the CBI has prepared a diverse strategy to strengthen the capacities of the Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees, including the establishment of a committee from the CBI as a member of the Private Banks League to improve the company's performance.

The ILO focuses on its intervention to the economic development in Iraq on credit guarantees. Currently, the ILO is implementing three projects aim to enhancing access to finance and promoting SMEs across Iraq. These projects include PROSPECTS, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands; the

Promotion of the Development of SMEs in Iraq, funded by KfW; and Green Business Promotion, funded by the Italian Agency. Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator, stated, "Credit guarantee is the pillar and catalyst for economic growth and job creation, which are part of the Decent Work Country Program in Iraq."

During a panel discussion, Marc Andre Hensel, KfW Office Manager in Iraq, addressed the economic development priorities for Iraq. He emphasized that promoting and developing credit guarantees is essential for enhancing the private sector. "Credit guarantees will allow banks to lend more and risk less, leading to better access to finance opportunities for SMEs," he said.

Mr. Hussein Thamer, the Director General of the Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees, expressed his enthusiasm

for the future, stating, "The Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees is revealing another chapter with the upcoming collaboration with the ILO Promoting the Development of SMEs in Iraq project. There will be a new version of the ICBG 2.0 in the upcoming phase." This collaboration promises to usher in a new era of enhanced support for SMEs, leveraging innovative strategies and robust frameworks to ensure greater access to finance and sustainable growth for small and medium enterprises across Iraq.

The conference underscored the critical role of credit guarantees in fostering economic stability and growth, particularly in conflict-affected areas, and highlighted the collaborative efforts needed to support SMEs and drive sustainable development in Iraq.

JICA and UNDP renew partnership to support Iraq's sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development

Baghdad, 21 December 2024 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Iraq Office have renewed their longstanding partnership to advance Iraq's socio-economic development through financing from the Government of Japan (GoJ) and JICA. This partnership, which has spanned over fifteen years of cooperation with the Government of Iraq (GoI), reflects the strong commitment of UNDP and the GoJ/JICA to addressing Iraq's need for efficient, stable, and reliable basic services and economic infrastructure. Together, they have significantly contributed to Iraq's human and economic growth, aligning with Iraq's national development plans and programmes focusing on economic diversification, infrastructure modernization, and improved social services.

In support of its reconstruction and development, Iraq has received 36 Official Development Assistance (ODA) loans from the GoJ and JICA, totaling nearly USD 11 billion. These include 34 vital sectors project loans and 2 development policy loans. This development assistance is designed to support Iraq in achieving its sustainable development goals, with a focus on improving living conditions nationwide and restoring

infrastructure to foster inclusive growth.

"JICA remains committed to addressing the development challenges with the Government of Iraq through this impactful partnership with UNDP. This partnership provides comprehensive support for Iraqi officials to achieve international standards in project management, combining technical expertise, capacity development, and development financing. All of this is aimed at improving livelihoods and promoting sustainable development in the country," said Hiroshi Suzuki, JICA Iraq Chief Representative.

With this renewed Partnership Agreement, and in alignment with Iraq's National Development Plan (NDP) 2024–2028, UNDP continues to provide critical support to the GoI to facilitate the smooth implementation of essential socio-economic projects financed by JICA's ODA loans. This support includes senior-level coordination, fiduciary oversight, progress monitoring, technical assistance, knowledge-sharing, and capacity development. Moreover, by fostering transparency, accountability, and adherence to international standards, the partnership ensures the successful delivery of these vital projects.

"This renewed partnership between

UNDP and JICA highlights our shared commitment to supporting Iraq's development goals, focusing on infrastructure development, and sustainable economic and human capital growth. Together, we aim to facilitate the successful implementation of critical projects that will not only rebuild Iraq's infrastructure but also promote long-term social and economic resilience, improving the lives of Iraqis across the country," said UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Auke Lootsma.

This unique and renewed partnership underscores the advantages of effective triangular cooperation in promoting prosperity, driving sustainable growth, and improving service delivery and infrastructure for a stable and thriving Iraq. It highlights the strong ownership by the Government of Iraq and serves as a model for impactful and sustainable partnerships that can contribute to Iraq's long-term development.



Sinjar Task Force meets in Baghdad

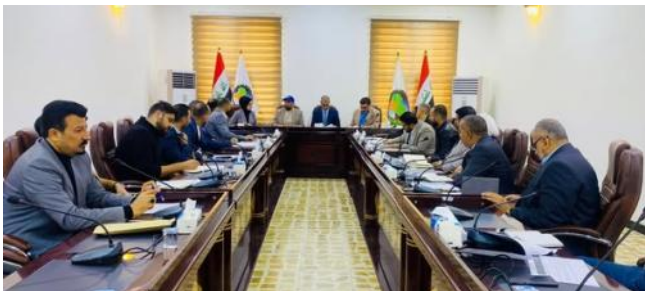
Sinjar, 31 October 2024 - Today marks a crucial milestone in advancing stabilization efforts in Sinjar. At the Sinjar Task Force meeting, the UN presented initial findings from a joint needs assessment with the Government of Iraq, which will inform future program of work in Sinjar.



Kirkuk, 06 November 2024 - Kirkuk Joint Coordination Forum convened today with active participation from governorate, UN agencies, and NGO representatives, co-chaired by governor assistant and IRC. Discussions covered IDP return challenges, lack of essential services and shortage of teachers and medical staff in return areas.



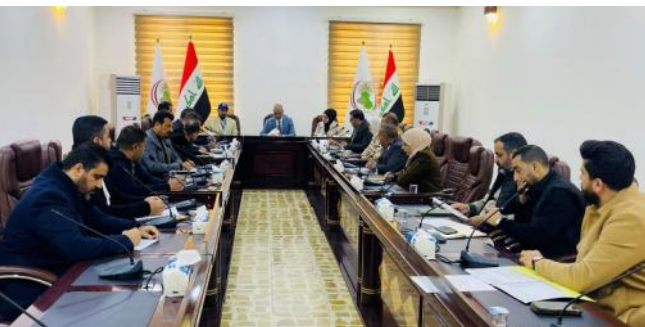
Kirkuk, 25 November 2024 - Kirkuk Joint Coordination Forum and Return Working Group held a session today on durable solutions for displacement. Participants, including local authorities, UN agencies, and NGOs discussed key challenges and pathways specific to Kirkuk.



Ramadi, 26 November 2024 - Today, the Anbar Joint Coordination Forum, co-chaired by the Deputy Governor and IOM, met in Ramadi with representatives from the government, UN agencies, and NGOs to discuss climate change impacts, census updates and reintegration challenges.



Ninewa, 26 November 2024 - The 8th Ninewa Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) convened today, bringing together Gov, UN, and NGO representatives to discuss key priorities, including school rehabilitation needs and scaling up Mine Risk Education in return areas.



Ramadi, 22 December 2024 - Today, the Anbar Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) met in Ramadi with government, UN and NGO representatives to discuss the #DurableSolutions Roadmap, reintegration of returnee students, and the JCF's 2024 overview.



Salah al-Din, 23 December 2024 - Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) in Salah al-Din held its monthly meeting, bringing together gov, UN and NGOs to discuss Durable Solutions Roadmap for eastern Salah al-Din and compensation for returnees and IDPs in eastern and southern areas of the governorate.

A panel discussion on Iraq's affordable housing crisis held at the Cairo World Urban Forum

Cairo, Egypt, 08 November 2024 - At the 12th World Urban Forum held in Cairo, housing experts from the Government of Iraq, UN-Habitat, the International Labour Organization, and the International Trade Centre led a panel discussion on Iraq's affordable housing crisis.

The panel explored approaches to Iraq's affordable housing challenges, drawing from regional lessons and emphasizing long-term, sustainable solutions.

The Building Equitable & Inclusive Transformation (BEIT) project, supported by the EU and implemented by UN-Habitat, ILO, and ITC, exemplifies efforts to integrate value chains, labour markets, and policy

frameworks.

All panelists concluded that whilst the challenges are formidable, so is the commitment and collaboration mobilized to address the issue and to provide adequate housing for the people of Iraq.

Dr. Maher Johan, Deputy Minister of Planning in Iraq, joined the Network Session on Urban Recovery Strategies in Conflict-affected Arab States.

In his speech, he highlighted the needs on addressing housing challenges in Iraq, especially in the aftermath of conflict, and emphasized the importance of UN-Habitat Iraq's expertise and support throughout the process.



World Urban Forum is an all inclusive platform for stakeholders to address challenges of sustainable urbanization. The forum is convened by the UN-Habitat.

At WUF, FAO Iraq presents Iraq's contingency plan to tackle sand and dust storms

Cairo, Egypt, 10 November 2024 - At the recently concluded Twelfth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12), convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), FAO Iraq participated in the Greening Cities session, showcasing innovative ways to build climate resilience in the NENA region.

FAO Sustainable Land Management (SLM) expert highlighted solutions to combat sand and dust storms using SLM practices, enhancing urban and rural sustainability.

FAO Iraq presented Iraq's contingency plan to tackle Sand & Dust Storms,

linking green urban spaces with broader climate strategies. Emphasizing regional expertise FAO

highlighted the importance of cross-border collaboration for effective climate change adaptation.



UN-Habitat hosts high level Korean diplomatic visit to joint projects implemented in Sinjar

Sinjar, 19 November 2024 - The Head of UN-Habitat Iraq Programme, Mr. Muslim Qazimi, welcomed the visit of the Korean Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Choi Sung-Soo, (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Baghdad, Iraq) along with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA Iraq Office) leadership, to witness the achievements of the project "Promoting Peace and Stability in Iraq by Facilitating Sustainable Returns," currently being implemented in Sinjar, Iraq.

The mission highlighted how UN-Habitat has been prioritizing the Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights of minorities, particularly women and people with disabilities, in the conflict-affected district of Sinjar.

The delegation had visited housings rehabilitated for female-headed households and disabled family members. Also, the delegation witnessed how



securing access to adequate housing and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities has been instrumental for the returns through testimony from the mukhtars (community leaders).

The Municipal Director, Mr. Kamal Sharo emphasized UN-Habitat's positive impact in Sinjar with the assistance of the

Korean government. He stressed the critical need for affordable and social housing and the provision of basic services to ensure everyone has access to sustainable return for the internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees, aiming to achieve durable solutions in the displaced areas.

Iraq: housing and complementary job creation

Baghdad, 14 December 2024 - Iraq has a shortage of 3.5 million homes. To tackle that problem, the country also has to consider how the climate crisis will make already scorching temperatures even hotter. No one can solve this challenge alone. That's why the International Trade Centre (ITC) is working with Iraq's government, UN partners, and the European Union to find a sustainable solution.

The project is called Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT), and it's taking a collaborative approach that builds respect for human rights, opportunities for small businesses, and climate solutions that will work long into the future. 'The Ministry is ready to collaborate on the BEIT project, which aligns with the government's plans,' said Malik Khalaf Wadi,



Director of the Private Sector Development Directorate at the Ministry of Trade. 'We aim to establish strong coordination to achieve new goals in the housing and private sectors.' ITC is working with the

International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN-Habitat, which is the global agency for housing and urban planning. Each agency is bringing its particular expertise to reach four core objectives.

Agriculture

A call to action: building a sustainable, efficient, and climate-resilient agrifood system in Iraq

By Ghulam Isaczai, Deputy Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq

Baghdad, 07 November 2024 - When I arrived in Iraq more than two years ago, I was struck by the urgency of the challenges facing this beautiful country. But as a father of three, this mission resonates deeply on a personal level. Every day, I think about the world our children will inherit, and it makes me reflect on the millions of children in Iraq who are facing unimaginable hardships—challenges they did not choose: conflict, hunger, and the worsening impact of climate change.

My work here is driven by the same responsibility I feel for my own family. It's about securing a brighter, more hopeful future for Iraq's children, who deserve nothing less than a safe and prosperous tomorrow.

Iraq is ranked as the fifth most vulnerable country in the world to water and food shortages and extreme temperatures.

Additionally, it is ranked 61st out of 163 countries on UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index. By 2050, water availability is expected to drop by 20%, which could lead to the loss of nearly one-third of Iraq's irrigated land.

This isn't just a future problem - it's happening now, with 54% of the

population are considered food vulnerable. Desertification, droughts, and soil salinization are already disrupting supply chains, increasing costs and worsening poverty across the country.

We are at a critical moment, and investing in climate-smart agriculture and water management has become more urgent than ever. Ensuring Iraq's food supply and protecting its children from a future of scarcity is essential for economic stability and the well-being of future generations.

Empowering agribusiness and small businesses for resilience

Agriculture and agri-food value chains are crucial to Iraq's economy, food security, and livelihoods, particularly among displaced and vulnerable populations. However, Iraq's heavy reliance on oil has resulted in high carbon footprint, making it extremely vulnerable to specific climate-related disasters, such as droughts, desertification, and sandstorms.

Small-scale farmers are particularly at risk, grappling with declining soil quality, increased post-harvest losses, and severe water shortages, all of which are crippling their productivity. Projections indicate that Iraq may lose 20% of its freshwater resources by 2050, putting crop yields and rural livelihoods at severe risk. I've visited these communities and listened to their stories and seen firsthand — the pain,



and struggle of families trying to survive in the face of these growing challenges.

But despite these difficulties, I believe there is hope. Over 65% of farmers and 40% of agribusinesses in Iraq are working to mitigate environmental risks, even though many lack the resources and technology needed for effective adaptation, their determination and resilience are inspiring.

Small businesses are critical in driving sustainable agricultural development and building resilience. However, they too are grappling with rising operational costs, disrupted supply chains, and diminished productivity. Inadequate infrastructure, especially in cold storage and transportation — adds to their burden, leading to greater post-harvest losses and reduced product quality, making it increasingly difficult for these businesses to compete and grow.

A call to action: building a sustainable, efficient, and climate-resilient agrifood system in Iraq *(continued)*

Hope amidst crisis

During a recent visit to Basra, I met Ali, a farmer who had been devastated by the worsening droughts and was unable to produce crops due to the lack of water, and like many others, he feared for the future of his land and family.

But with the collaborative efforts of UNCT and our partners, Ali's village is now part of a multi-hazard early warning system that helps farmers anticipate climate-related hazards.

Ali received training in climate-smart farming techniques, such as drip irrigation and drought-resistant crops which helped him revive his land. For the first time in years, he feels a sense of hope—as his farm is now thriving, producing enough to feed his entire village.

Ali's story reminds me of the incredible resilience of Iraq's people, and reaffirms my belief that, with the right support, even the greatest challenges can be overcome.

The UN Country Team's efforts in supporting Iraq's food security

In 2023, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq provided livelihoods support to over 11,900 individuals, particularly farmers in drought-prone areas, to sustain food security. This assistance included cash grants, drought-resilient seeds, fertilizers, and modern irrigation equipment, such as solar-powered systems, along with training in climate-smart agriculture and food safety standards. As a result, farmers reported over a 30% increase in both yield and quality, significantly enhancing food production and nutrition security, and strengthening climate resilience in rural communities. Under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the UNCT in Iraq has been working closely with the Iraqi government to address climate change and food security. Here are several key interventions:

FAO's contribution to food security strategy: FAO, working with the Iraqi government, developed a comprehensive Food Security Strategy. This strategy builds on international best practices to ensure food availability and resilience, especially for Iraq's most vulnerable populations, by enhancing productivity and sustainability across critical crop sectors. FAO's value chain analysis has identified opportunities to improve production, market linkages, and

competitiveness in crops like dates, tomatoes, and wheat, providing a framework for long-term agricultural sustainability.

WFP's modern irrigation and non-traditional cash crop initiatives: WFP has promoted solar irrigation and supported diversification into non-traditional crops among smallholder farmers in drought-affected regions, enhancing income security and building resilience. Additionally, WFP supports small-scale beekeeping and shrimp farming, which diversify rural income sources and boost local economies.

ITC's empowerment of agribusiness for resilient growth and food security: Through the SAAVI project, ITC has empowered Iraqi farmers and small businesses to boost market competitiveness, adopt climate-smart practices, and secure stable market connections. By forming agribusiness alliances, ITC has enabled smallholders to collectively engage with major retailers and processing factories, resulting in monthly transactions of hundreds of tonnes of fresh produce and significant revenue gains. Additionally, ITC has supported the government in developing strategies for poultry, tomatoes, and potatoes, guiding sectors to enhance competitiveness, advance sustainable food systems, and equip smallholders with sustainable practices and improved post-harvest management—paving the way for resilient incomes.

A call to action: Time to act

Addressing the climate-food nexus in Iraq requires collective action from governments, donors, the international community, and local communities.

First, the Government of Iraq should prioritize the swift enactment of the Public-Private Partnerships law, incorporating incentives such as tax relief, reduced tariffs, and smart subsidies for small businesses including agribusiness.

These initiatives will foster public-private partnerships and attract investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, including renewable energy projects and sustainable water management systems, essential for scaling sustainable practices in agriculture, enhancing small business access to both domestic and international markets, bolstering Iraq's food security and driving economic growth.

Second, the international community should provide technical assistance to

the government and civil society in developing and adapting climate-related policies that prioritize sustainable resource management in forestry, agriculture, and renewable energy.

This support will facilitate the integration of climate adaptation into policies that align with Iraq's Nationally Determined Contributions and Green Growth Strategy.

Third, the international community must step up its support. Iraq cannot face this crisis alone. Donors must provide the funding and technical assistance needed to help farmers and small businesses adapt to the changing climate. This support should focus on equipping farmers with the technology and knowledge they need to implement advanced agricultural practices, conserve water, and protect natural resources.

Finally, local communities should be empowered to take ownership of climate action. By adopting sustainable farming techniques, conserving water, and protecting natural resources, they can play a critical role in securing Iraq's agricultural future.

Their resilience and innovation must be supported, not only through adequate policies and financial assistance but also through capacity-building initiatives, access to training programs, and the development of local networks that facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among farmers and stakeholders.

We are at a critical moment. The decisions we make today will determine the future of Iraq's agrifood system and, ultimately, the well-being of its people. The time to act is now. Together, we can build a more resilient, sustainable Iraq - one where future generations can thrive in a healthier, greener environment.



How do you improve food security in conflict-led, fragile settings?

Baghdad, 07 November 2024 - The consequences of conflict are devastating, profound and long-lasting. Apart from the tragic loss of human life, they result in substantial losses of livelihoods, employment, and income.

Conflict exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, with even minor economic setbacks capable of pushing individuals and families to the brink of existence. In these settings, rebuilding markets is a critical step towards economic reconstruction and resilience, as well as for improving food security.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) has developed a comprehensive two-fold approach to rebuild these markets:

- through supporting a conducive business environment in collaboration with governments and policymakers, and
- by empowering local farmers and firms with the help of alliances.

Disruptions of agricultural systems and food securities

Conflicts disrupt agricultural systems, leading to a decline in production, investment and exports. These effects can be attributed to a wide array of factors, including security concerns, disruption of traditional trade routes, damaged infrastructure, weakened institutions, and the displacement of labour, alongside fractured communities. Farmers and small firms face severe challenges, struggling with restricted access to essential inputs, markets and business support services. But they are the ones playing a major role in rebuilding local economies.

Addressing broken down agricultural systems requires a holistic approach that combines grassroots empowerment with systemic policy reforms.

This is why ITC develops market systems by promoting alliances among producers and small firms, empowering them to collaborate on production, quality standards, and distribution. This leads to better competitiveness and market access.

At the same time, ITC collaborates closely with governments and policymakers to drive critical policy reforms that facilitate a stable and conducive environment for market recovery. This model, that also embeds assistance to select business support organizations, has proven successful in conflict-affected areas such as Iraq, where alliances, coupled with strategic infrastructure and market linkages, have led to tangible improvements in productivity, business operations, and food security.



Case Study: Revitalizing agribusinesses in Iraq

In early 2021, ITC, through the European Union funded SAAVI project, brought together local farmers in conflict-affected areas of Iraq, such as Al Quba village in Mosul. Moving away from traditional models that rely on external subsidies, the project introduced a competitive approach which transforms farmers into profitable business owners. A new "buyer-led" approach changed the game.

Agribusiness alliances now collectively engage with large buyers. Each alliance receives support in aligning the produce with a buyer's requirements – from seeds to logistics, sorting and cleaning to storage and transportation. Moreover, to optimize sustainable growth, supply chain efficiency, and streamline post-harvest processes, ITC in partnership with the World Food Programme and the UN Agency for Refugees (UNHCR), co-invested in essential facilities, such as storage units and aggregation hubs.

ITC's approach has attracted major buyers, including PepsiCo, Carrefour, BEPP and Holland Bazar who are interested in establishing long-term partnerships with these alliances.

Ultimately, these partnerships create a win-win situation: producers secure higher revenues, while consumers can access locally produced, nutritious food at competitive prices.

In parallel, ITC collaborates with the Iraqi government to advocate for economic and trade-related reforms, and particularly, to support Iraq's accession process to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Complying with WTO standards offers a more predictable business environment and investment climate, attracting foreign investment in agriculture and agri-food sectors. This investment can lead to value chain efficiency, better production, less post-harvest losses and thus, directly

improving food availability.

Finally, this approach led to the creation of the Iraq National Trade Forum with a focus on agribusiness. Its second edition in 2024 featured business matchmaking and networking, while highlighting the role of trade and investment in strengthening food security through resilient local supply chains.

A few highlights

- 15 new agribusiness alliances (of which 1 woman-led), encompassing 1,700 farmers
- Monthly business transactions with retailers with over 215 tonnes of fresh produce, amounting to over 456 million IQD (equivalent to \$350,000)
- \$5 million in business matchmaking at second Iraq National Trade Forum
- 72% of businesses introduced significant changes in their practices, for instance increased profitability
- 88% of businesses adopted new farming practices that have enhanced their competitiveness
- 68% of businesses experienced improvements in farm efficiency that positively impacted productivity in 2023
- Validation workshop of local agribusinesses to plan, endorse, and develop a micro-project proposal.

Recommendations for policymakers

Developing markets in conflict-affected fragile settings is vital for economic recovery and food security. Policymakers have a crucial role in facilitating these processes. Below are our recommendations based on lessons learned:

1. Market-led approach: Encourage interventions that prioritize market demands and buyer preferences. By engaging local farmers and small firms in understanding market dynamics,

How do you improve food security in conflict-led, fragile settings? (continued)

policies can be shaped to enhance competitiveness and align agricultural production with consumer needs.

2. Build a conducive business environment and investment climate: Implement reforms that streamline trade processes and improve regulatory frameworks for businesses. Ensure that policies are responsive to the unique challenges faced by businesses in fragile contexts, facilitating easier

access to inputs, markets and resources.

3. Foster public-private dialogue and partnership: Promote partnerships among government agencies, private sector, development partners, and civil society to create a comprehensive support ecosystem. Collaborative efforts can lead to shared resources, knowledge transfer, and coordinated strategies that bolster local economies

and food security.

Through these supportive policies and targeted investments, policymakers can create conditions that not only address immediate food security concerns but also lay the foundation for long-term economic stability in fragile settings.

By Karla Solis Ruiz and Eric Buchot, International Trade Centre

FAO enhances veterinary capacity for clinical diagnosis and animal disease recognition in Iraq

Erbil, 14 November 2024 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, in collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR-KRG), conducted 4 days comprehensive training workshop on "Clinical Diagnosis and Disease Recognition" in Erbil. This workshop, aimed to strengthen Iraq's animal disease diagnosis, reporting, and surveillance systems.

The workshop is part of the FAO project titled "Strengthening Iraq Veterinary Legislation and Expanding Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance," funded by the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). It featured rigorous training on the clinical

diagnosis of priority animal diseases, differential diagnosis, and sample collection.

A total of 17 veterinary staff, including veterinarians from hospital dispensaries, epidemiology, and laboratory specialists, attended from targeted governorates, including Najaf, Sulaymaniyah, Diyala, and Missan.

Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, underscored the essential role of accurate, timely disease detection as a cornerstone for safeguarding both public and animal health across Iraq. "by equipping veterinary professionals with advanced clinical skills and real-time reporting tools like EMA-i and EMPRES-i+, Iraq can significantly mitigate the devastating effects of disease outbreaks on livestock and food security" Dr.

ElHajj Hassan highlighted.

His address reinforced the importance of the One Health approach, connecting animal health with broader public health and environmental outcomes, and emphasized FAO's commitment to empowering Iraq's veterinary sector to tackle health threats effectively and sustainably.

Throughout the structured four-day agenda, participants engaged in practical, hands-on sessions covering essential diseases such as Blue Tongue, Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, Anthrax, and PPR (Peste des Petits Ruminants). Sessions on Lumpy Skin Disease, Avian Influenza, and FMD (Foot-and-Mouth Disease) highlighted critical clinical symptoms and identification techniques. Led by the FAO national team and experts from veterinary colleges across Iraq, the training emphasized biosafety, biosecurity practices, and collaboration across government and syndicate organizations to ensure effective disease surveillance and response in Iraq.

This training strengthens Iraq's ability to detect and respond to animal diseases that impact livestock and public health. The shared knowledge equips Iraq's veterinary workforce to handle disease outbreaks effectively, promoting food security and supporting the One Health approach.



FAO empowers 40 extension officers to promote agroecology and marshland conservation for SLM in southern Iraq

Basra, 30 November 2024 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, in close collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Environment (MoE), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) conducted a 5-day training workshop in Basra on agroecology and marshland

conservation in southern Iraq.

The training held under the project on "Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for Improved Livelihoods in Degraded Areas of Iraq," funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by FAO in partnership with MoE, MoA, MoWR as well as local governments, aimed to empower 40

extension officers from ThiQar and AlMuthanna governorates to facilitate extension service to the Sustainable Land Management program, promoting agroecology, marshland conservation, and sustainable farming in southern Iraq.

The trainees serve as facilitators on established 25 Farmer Field Schools

FAO empowers 40 extension officers ... (continued)

(FFS), and demonstration plots under Agroecology practice across ThiQar and Al Muthanna Governorates. They were capacitated and exclusively mandated to support implementation of SLM programming, including agriculture and wetlands in southern Iraq.

“FAO and key stakeholders promote Agroecology practice which is improving agricultural production qualitatively and quantitatively and bring about positive impacts on multiple SDGs. Additionally, there are environmental benefits ensuing more efficient resource use in the agricultural production and consumption phases of the supply chain, ensuring a lower impact on

water resources and landscape ecosystems” said Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Iraq Representative.

The trained extension officers will cascade the knowledge through training 1 000 farmers to adopt the Agroecology practice and Marshland Conservation for SLM to improve livelihood in wetland areas. Also, the current food system approaches will build on these planned outputs and support a more integrated approach to the multiple objectives of environmental, social and economic development for sustainable agriculture which enhances biodiversity, food security and livelihood restoration.

The importance of mixed farming (vegetable crops, fruit and forest trees) is being demonstrated by FFS under agroecology practice: (i) livelihood economic benefits (crop-tree interactions produce food for home consumption and sale of surplus food, legume forest trees supplement fodder and income) and (ii) environmental benefits (tree root system and tree canopy serve as wind-breaks to combat soil erosion, legume forest trees improve soil fertility, wind-break trees provide a micro-climate to the home garden, and planting trees is a mitigation measure on climate change as trees reduce greenhouse gas from the atmosphere).

The project objective is to reverse land degradation processes, conserve and sustainably manage land and water resources in degraded marshland ecosystems in Southern Iraq for greater access to services from resilient ecosystems and improved livelihoods. It aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). By promoting sustainable land management practices, that will be enhancing local communities’ resilience and contributing to global environmental benefits.



The Legislative Drafting Committee discusses updating animal health legislation

Baghdad, 02 December 2024 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq and the Iraqi Ministries of Agriculture and Health held two meetings dedicated to discussing updating animal health legislation to be in line with international reference standards, as well as to address legislative overlaps between the Public Health Law and the Animal Health Law.

During the third in-person meeting of the Legislative Drafting Committee for Animal Health Law in Iraq, FAO in Iraq, in cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and in coordination with the Legislative Drafting Committee reviewed the regulatory framework governing animal health in Iraq and align it with international standards and best practices.

The committee comprises members from the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Health, and Agriculture & Water Resources and representatives of the Kurdistan government, in



addition to members from the Veterinary Syndicate, the Border Ports Authority, the Council of State, and the Parliamentary Committee for Agriculture, Water Resources and Marshlands Affairs.

This meeting falls within the framework of the ongoing series of meetings of the Committee, which aim

to discuss specialized topics related to the alignment of the legislative framework with international standards and best practices as documented by the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This specific meeting focused on topics related to the private

The Legislative Drafting Committee discusses updating animal health legislation *(continued)*

veterinary medical sector and animal markets.

It is worth noting that this national consultative process for legal review is the first of its kind. It is based on the successful completion of the first phase of the program, where the Iraqi government adopted recommendations for major legislative improvements to resolve overlaps in combating animal diseases.

In a parallel context, during the second meeting of the Joint Working Committee between the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, the legislative overlaps between Public Health Law No. 89 of 1981 and Animal Health Law No. 32 of 2013 were also discussed. A table of articles containing legislative overlaps was prepared by the legal

team of the project with members of the Committee formed by Ministerial Order No. 27423 on 6/26/2024. During this meeting, the door was opened for dialogue between the committee members to discuss the agenda and clarify the operational methods taken in addressing the legislative overlaps between the Public Health and Animal Health Laws on the ground, and to develop proposed framework for sorting out this overlap.

These meetings come within the framework of the project "Strengthening Veterinary Legislation in Iraq and Expanding the Scope of Providing Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance", funded by the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), which aims to strengthen

animal disease surveillance systems in Iraq.

Dr. Salah Al-Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, inaugurated the two meetings, stressing the importance of working to develop the Iraqi legislative framework regarding animal health and veterinary services and its relationship to achieving food security in Iraq in general. He also stressed FAO's commitment to providing support for updating legislation of animal health laws to comply with international standards followed by the World Organization. He also stressed the importance of the Kurdistan Regional Government's participation in this very important endeavor.

Japan and UNIDO revitalize dairy farming among vulnerable populations in Iraq

Nineveh, 03 December 2024 - Shukria Darwesh Qasim, a 24-year-old woman from the town of Sinjar located in Iraq's Nineveh Governorate.

She reminisced about having once lived a simple and peaceful life in the heart of her Yezidi ancestral homeland. Her family, deeply rooted in dairy farming, worked the land and tended to their goats to maintain their livelihood.

However, their lives were torn apart when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces invaded Sinjar on 3 August 2014. Alongside thousands of other displaced Yezidis, Shukria's family sought refuge in the town of Sharia, located in Duhok Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, struggling to rebuild their lives amidst the devastation.

The trauma of displacement was compounded by financial hardship. Shukria's father, once the family's sole provider, is now unable to work due to a herniated disk, which left her older brother to take her father's place as the family's breadwinner. However, her brother was unable to find stable employment and his irregular work made it difficult for the family of eight to make ends meet.

To survive, Shukria and her siblings turned to the family's only remaining resource, their small herd of goats. Using traditional methods, they began using goat milk to produce yogurt and cheese to sell within her community. While the dairy products brought in some income, it still wasn't enough to sustain the entire family. "We tried



hard, but it was never enough," Shukria stated. "We knew the quality was good, but we lacked the skills and equipment to take our business further."

That all changed when Shukria learned about a dairy training programme offered by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), supported by funding from the Government of Japan. Determined to improve her family's situation, Shukria enrolled in the training, which proved to be a turning point for her and her family.

The training provided Shukria with modern dairy production techniques that were revolutionary compared to the traditional methods her family had previously relied on. She learned about temperature control, hygiene, and pH testing, skills that directly improved

the quality of her products. "Even small changes in cleanliness and technique made a big difference in the quality of my products," she explained.

Also included in the training were sessions on entrepreneurship development. This training, together with new equipment Shukria received, allowed her to increase production capacity. With the new tools, including stainless steel strainers, digital scales, and large cooking pots, she was able to produce more yogurt and cheese, and at a higher quality, helping her command better prices in the market.

"The training opened my eyes to how much more I could achieve through my dairy business," Shukria said. "Before, we relied on the traditional ways we knew in dairy production, but with new techniques, we're producing more efficiently and selling better products."

Japan and UNIDO revitalize dairy farming among vulnerable populations in Iraq (continued)

Thanks to the larger cooking pots and strainers, Shukria increased her yogurt production from 10 kg per day to 15 kg, depending on the season. The family slowly began to see an improvement in their financial situation, as the increased output led to a more reliable income.

Shukria now dreams of expanding the family's goat herd one day, which will enhance her dairy business, further boosting production and generating more income for her family. "We want to grow, but it has to be in a way that we can sustain."

Shukria's outlook remains more positive than ever. She has become part of a close-knit community of dairy producers, thanks to the Japan – UNIDO programme. "We created a community of dairy producers," she said proudly. "Sharing tips and encouragement with others who are going through the same struggles keeps

me motivated."

Shukria also dreams of one day returning to her homeland in Sinjar, where she believes there will be more opportunities to grow her business. "I can already imagine my goats grazing on the lands my ancestors farmed," she shared. "My hope is to expand the business and employ others from my community who share my passion."

Shukria's story is one of many following the support from Japan and UNIDO. It is also a story of resilience and hope. Through her passion to work in dairy production and with the support of Japan and UNIDO, she is building a better future for herself and her family, one batch of yogurt and cheese at a time.

UNIDO's "Emergency livelihood support to mitigate the food insecurity crisis among vulnerable peoples in Iraq" project, funded by the government of Japan, has been a

lifeline for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, host communities, and women entrepreneurs, particularly those struggling to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of conflict.

By equipping participants with essential skills in modern production techniques, hygiene standards, and market strategies, the programme has been successful in enhancing participants' capacity to thrive in the competitive business environment.

Beyond the comprehensive training, the project provided tangible in-kind support, such as tools and equipment, enabling participants to immediately apply their new knowledge and scale up their businesses. This integrated approach empowered each of the trainees, especially women, to not only secure livelihoods but also contribute to the local economy, fostering resilience in their communities and reducing the strain of food insecurity.

FAO strengthens Iraq's preparedness for animal diseases through applying "Good Emergency Management Practice"



Erbil, 12 December 2024 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, in collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR-KRG), successfully conducted a four-day workshop on "Good Emergency Management Practice (GEMP)" in Erbil.

The workshop, supported by the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) under the project "Strengthening Iraq Veterinary Legislation and Expanding Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance," aimed to enhance Iraq's preparedness and response capacities to address Transboundary Animal Diseases (TAD), such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Peste des Petits

Ruminants (PPR), Brucellosis, and others pose significant threats to livestock, livelihoods, and food security in Iraq.

Recognizing the need for stronger veterinary response systems, the workshop focused on equipping 20 multidisciplinary participants, including representatives from Iraq's veterinary services, laboratory specialists, and other key stakeholders with tools and strategies to effectively manage animal health emergencies, based on GEMP principles.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, emphasized the importance of preparedness: "highlighting that transboundary animal diseases requires robust emergency management systems that can mitigate

risks to both animal health and food security. By implementing GEMP principles, Iraq's veterinary sector will be better prepared to protect its livestock and strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems. This workshop reflects FAO's commitment to building sustainable, science-based capacities in Iraq" he said

"It provided participants with the knowledge and practical experience needed to manage animal health emergencies effectively" Dr. Salah added.

The workshop included a dynamic program including both theoretical learning and hands-on exercises, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of emergency management practices. Participants explored the principles of GEMP, engaged in a simulation exercise to practice outbreak responses, and identified critical gaps in the country's preparedness systems. They will be engaged to develop a roadmap for improving contingency plans for priority animal diseases, with clear milestones to guide implementation. The workshop also fostered stronger collaboration among stakeholders and introduced FAO's innovative tools and methodologies, such as EMA-i and EMPRES-i+, to enhance disease detection, reporting, and response capacities.

FAO strengthens veterinary capacities in epidemiology and disease surveillance in Iraq

Erbil, 26 December 2024 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq conducted a comprehensive five-day Training of Trainers (ToTs) workshop on veterinary epidemiology and disease surveillance in Erbil under activities of the project of "Strengthening Iraq Veterinary Legislation and Expanding Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance". This initiative aimed to address critical gaps in Iraq's veterinary surveillance and reporting systems, particularly at central levels and in underserved governorates.

Veterinary epidemiology plays a crucial role in examining disease patterns in animal populations to control outbreaks and protect public health. Effective surveillance relies on systematic animal health data collection and analysis, ensuring prompt responses to emerging threats. Enhancing veterinary staff's epidemiology skills improved disease surveillance and early warning systems, ensuring socio-economic stability and public health.

Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, emphasized the urgent need to strengthen veterinary systems to address emerging disease risks. "Improving surveillance and early warning capabilities is key to protecting livestock health and food security. By equipping veterinary staff with critical skills, Iraq can better prevent and manage disease outbreaks, safeguarding livelihoods and ensuring

food security. This workshop reflects FAO's commitment to building sustainable, science-based veterinary capacities across Iraq within One Health approach" he said.

The workshop focused on enhancing the disease surveillance and early warning capabilities of veterinary staff through comprehensive training in systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting. This was designed to ensure rapid detection and effective management of livestock diseases, contributing to stronger disease prevention efforts in Iraq.

The training covered several key areas, including basic epidemiology concepts, the design and implementation of animal disease surveillance plans, surveillance methods, sampling procedures, disease reporting systems, and techniques for investigating disease outbreaks.

A total of 24 participants attended the workshop, representing a broad range of stakeholders involved in animal health and disease surveillance. These included field veterinarians and laboratory staff from targeted governorates, selected staff from the Baghdad Epidemiology Department, staff members from the GDVAW/Erbil Animal Health Department, and representatives from slaughterhouse departments in Baghdad and Erbil.

By equipping veterinary staff with critical skills in disease surveillance and reporting, the project aimed to prevent livestock disease outbreaks, protect livelihoods, and enhance food security in the region. Through systematic training and the cascading of expertise, the program contributed to the development of resilient and effective veterinary systems across Iraq.



Labour Issues

Employment specialists in Kurdistan Region trained on Digital Employment Platform



Erbil, 23 October 2024 - In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and Soft Max, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has successfully trained 30 employment specialists from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) on the newly developed Digital Employment Platform. This intensive

three-day training gave participants a thorough understanding of the platform's features, highlighting its practical applications for streamlining job matching and enhancing employment services.

The training offered step-by-step guidance on navigating the platform, designed to connect job seekers with employers, particularly in the private sector. Participants engaged in interactive discussions to share feedback and suggest improvements, focusing on optimizing platform functionality. Additionally, the program emphasized stronger collaboration between MoLSA, vocational training centers, and other

key stakeholders to ensure the platform's widespread adoption across the KRI.

By the conclusion of the training, participants had formulated regional coordination strategies to integrate the platform into their daily operations. They also gained the necessary skills to efficiently support job seekers in their regions. A detailed six-month action plan was developed to drive private sector engagement and expand platform outreach to underserved communities.

The platform is set to be officially launched on 10 November 2024, during the Job Fair in Sami Abdrakhman Park, Erbil

A tripartite social dialogue to validate the business registration manual (BRM) for MSMEs in Iraq

Baghdad, 31 October 2024 - The ILO, in cooperation with the Private Sector Development Directorate at the Ministry of Trade (MOT), organized a tripartite workshop that included representatives of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), the Ministry of Industry (MOIN), the Ministry of Planning (MOP), the Ministry of Environment (MOEN), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI), the Farmers Association Union, the Iraqi Federation of Industries (IFI), the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and representatives of workers, at the Station headquarter in Baghdad.

This workshop aimed to validate the registration business manual (BRM) for SMEs in Iraq, which aims to support entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs in moving from the informal economy to the formal economy. This process begins with the legal registration of businesses, followed by the steps of registering workers under the social security umbrella, which contributes to enhancing the protection of workers in the Iraqi labor market.

A technical committee, including



representatives from all relevant authorities, collected data and defined the necessary procedures for business registration through a comprehensive questionnaire. The registration business manual is expected to be finalized by the end of this year and will be launched as part of a national awareness campaign designed to encourage registration and highlight its benefits.

Additionally, recommendations will be developed to streamline and simplify the registration procedures. These recommendations will be consolidated within a unified platform across the relevant authorities, making the

registration process more accessible and straightforward for business owners in Iraq.

This initiative falls within the framework of the project "Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business" implemented by the ILO with the support of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). The project is part of a broader effort under the Iraq Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) signed by the Government, employers' and workers' organizations, and the ILO to promote employment and decent work.

Iraq, ILO and partners launch the National Social Security Awareness Campaign

Baghdad, 05 November 2024 - (ILO News) Tuesday, the National Social Security Awareness Campaign in Iraq was launched through a joint effort by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with the European Union, and with support from the Social Protection Joint Programme, a joint programme by the ILO, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP). The campaign aims to highlight the new Social Security and Pensions Law No. 18, approved by the Iraqi Parliament last year, which represents a historic step towards strengthening Iraq's social protection system. The law aims to cover private sector workers and support informal workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing.

The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Mr. Ahmed Al-Asadi, delivered a speech at the event, underscoring the significance of the new law, which he described as one of the most important laws issued since 2003. He highlighted

its role in empowering workers, securing their rights, maternity benefits, and determining retirement age. He added, "This law empowers workers, making them similar to employees in terms of optional insurance choices. The private sector in Iraq and globally represents the majority, yet private sector participation in Iraq's social security remains low at about 10%. This is why it is important to raise awareness and promote this law widely across society to ensure its application."

In his opening remarks, Mr. Hussein Saeed Arab, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Labour and Civil Society Organizations, emphasized the importance of the campaign and its role in raising awareness about citizens' rights and obligations under the law, stating: "This national campaign for social security awareness is a crucial part of efforts to spread knowledge about citizens' rights and duties under this law, simplify their understanding of its services, and encourage everyone to

participate as part of the social protection network."

The campaign seeks to increase awareness among citizens and employers about the registration process for the social security system and its various benefits, such as income security upon retirement, disability and survivors' benefits, and health coverage. The campaign is expected to contribute to increasing formal labor force participation and stimulating economic growth.

Mr. Lennart Deridder, Head of



Iraq, ILO and partners launch the National Social Security Awareness Campaign *(continued)*

Cooperation at the European Union, highlighted the importance of this campaign in building a new social contract with citizens, noting, "Social security is a fundamental pillar for achieving social and economic stability. We thank the ILO for its technical support and guidance in drafting the law and preparing the awareness campaign. We also express our deep appreciation and continued support for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in implementing Social Security Law No. 18."

Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, reiterated the ILO's commitment to supporting Iraq in building a comprehensive social

security system. She said, "We must work together – the government, employers, workers, and international partners – to create a system that goes beyond being a safety net to become a platform for growth, stability, and dignity."

Mr. Igor Bosc, ILO Senior Social Protection Technical Advisor in Iraq, explained that "the campaign we are launching today is essential for bridging the knowledge gap, ensuring that both workers and employers understand the registration process, the benefits provided by social security, and how to access them."

The event included the signing of a pledge by participating entities to

support the national social security awareness campaign, along with a panel discussion on the future of social security in Iraq, focusing on legislation, implementation, and the role of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, labor organizations, employer organizations, and civil society in promoting a culture of social security.

The campaign will reach target groups through multiple strategies, including traditional media and social media platforms, to ensure that information reaches all workers and employers and to encourage everyone to actively participate in the social security system, contributing to a fair and prosperous future for Iraq.

Transforming employment in Kurdistan: ILO and MoLSA host job fair and introduce Job-Matching Platform



Erbil, 10 November 2024 - (ILO News) The International Labour Organization (ILO), in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and social partners, has launched an innovative Job-Matching Platform under the EU-funded Joint Social Protection Programme for Iraq, co-implemented with UNICEF and WFP.

The Job-Matching Platform is a digital tool designed to simplify the recruitment process by linking job seekers with employers across Kurdistan. Developed by the ILO and MoLSA and overseen by the Kurdistan government's Department of Information Technology, this platform aims to facilitate access to employment and help employers identify qualified local talent more efficiently.

MoLSA, the lead partner for the job fair, collaborated with the Kurdistan Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Kurdistan Region Trade Union, and the Ministry of Planning (MoP). The event attracted a wide range of participants from various industries, underscoring its significant impact on the local job market.

High-ranking officials attended the event, including Ms. Zakiya Said Saleh, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Kurdistan Region Trade Union, MoP, and the European Union.

Commenting on the platform's potential, Ms. Zakiya Said Saleh stated: "This job fair and the launch of the Job-Matching Platform mark an important step toward creating sustainable employment solutions in Kurdistan. By connecting job seekers directly with employers and providing the resources they need, we are empowering our local workforce and strengthening the region's economy."

Mr. Lennart Deridder, Head of Cooperation for the European Union, reiterated the EU's commitment to regional economic development: "Today's launch is more than a tool for employment; it is a step towards economic inclusivity, stability, and shared opportunity for all people in the Kurdistan Region."

The job fair, held at the Erbil International Gallery in Sami Abdulrahman Park, welcomed hundreds of job seekers and employers

from various sectors across the Kurdistan Region. This lively event fostered connections, networking, and direct recruitment. Attendees engaged in one-on-one discussions, workshops, and networking sessions, sharing insights on successful job matching. Many employers conducted on-site interviews, allowing job seekers to showcase their skills and secure potential job offers. Interactive sessions offered recruitment guidance, boosting job seekers' confidence and preparing them for the evolving job market.

Mr. Gailan Said Aziz, representing the Kurdistan Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, highlighted the platform's benefits: "The job platform will be a valuable opportunity to showcase job opportunities and reveal hidden skills, offering employers a diverse range of options."

Acknowledging the importance of the Job-Matching Platform and the job fair for promoting employment in Kurdistan, Mr. Igor Bosc, Social Protection Program Chief Technical Advisor, noted, "Based on ILO's experience implementing similar platforms globally, for this initiative to succeed, we must encourage government oversight of other private job platforms and recruitment agencies, bringing them under the purview of this official platform to ensure comprehensive coverage and compliance." He also emphasized the importance of integrating the Job-Matching Platform into the overarching vision for promoting decent employment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to unlock its full potential.

ILO continues to provide technical support to update labor legislation in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 November 2024 - The National Center for Occupational Safety and Health at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), held a tripartite consultative seminar on the draft Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Law in Iraq on Monday, 18 November 2024. During the seminar, the rationale for enacting Iraq's first OSH law was presented, aiming to address legislative gaps in this area. These include the coverage of economic units and employees in both the public and government sectors, as well as defining the roles and responsibilities of governmental institutions, employers, workers, and their organizations in establishing the foundations of OSH in Iraq, in line with national frameworks and international labor standards. Representatives of ministries, workers' organizations, and employers'



organizations participating in the seminar shared their visions and feedback on the general framework of the draft law. They highlighted the provisions that should be included to enhance OSH in Iraq. Experts from the ILO also presented the organization's perspective on labor legislation, particularly regarding OSH, to ensure alignment with international labor standards.

The ILO continues to provide technical

support for Iraq's efforts to develop labor legislation, specifically the first amendment to the current Labor Law No. 37 of 2015, the draft Trade Union Law, and the draft OSH Law. This work is part of the "Building an Equitable and Inclusive Transformation" (BEIT) project, funded by the European Union, which aims to promote decent work and affordable green housing for women and youth in Iraq.

ILO and the Supreme Youth Council kick off a major training program to empower Iraqi Youth in the job market



Erbil, 23 November 2024 - Today marks the start of a six-day significant Training of Trainers (TOT) program in Erbil, launched on October 28, 2024, as part of the strategic partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Supreme Youth Council.

This program includes:

Career counseling Training, utilizing the innovative ILO "My Future at Work" toolkit, which covers:

- How to choose my future profession.
- How to organize my job search
- How to work in the green economy
- Green Business Training, focusing on sustainable business practices and equipping participants with the tools

and knowledge to establish or transition businesses into eco-friendly enterprises, promoting sustainability and innovation.

Following the training, ILO and the Supreme Youth Council will jointly conduct a coaching and follow-up process. This will ensure that the trainers are well-supported in delivering these critical concepts and tools to thousands of youth across Iraq, amplifying the impact of this initiative. As part of the continuous learning journey, trainers will also get exposure to social protection through the TRANSFORM initiative early next year.

This training is supported by two ILO

projects:

□ Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business

□ Social Protection Programme in Iraq: Leveraging Effective Response and Inclusion

Together, these programs aim to empower Iraqi youth with the skills and knowledge needed for decent work, career guidance, and green economy opportunities, paving the way for sustainable development.

Let's work together to build a brighter, greener future for Iraq's youth!



ILO and Ministry of Youth and Sport launch Job Search Club National Program in Iraq

Baghdad, 25 November 2024 – (ILO News) The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and as part of the PROSPECTS partnership, has officially launched today the Job Search Club National Program in Iraq. This initiative aims to empower young Iraqis with enhanced job search and employability skills, paving the way for their integration into the labour market.

The Job Search Clubs (JSC) initiative is an ILO-developed methodology designed to provide youth with structured activities that support them in finding suitable employment in a short period of time. The program marks a significant step toward equipping Iraq's youth with the tools and skills needed to navigate the job market effectively.

The first phase of the program involves training over 25 facilitators who will deliver the Job Search Clubs across Iraq's governorates, including areas with high rates of youth unemployment and displacement. These facilitators will play a critical role in reaching hundreds of young people aged 18-34, especially in regions most affected by unemployment and conflict.

In his speech during the launch event, Dr. Ahmed Saad Alawi, Director General of National Programs, Regional Affairs and Scientific Care at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, said: "Today, through the National Job Search Program, we can reduce the gaps that stand in the way of young people finding job opportunities. By developing their skills and working to change the mechanisms of job searching, we aim to overcome the challenges young people face today."

The Job Search Club National Program is part of the broader PROSPECTS

initiative, supported by the Government of the Netherlands. PROSPECTS focuses on skills education, employment, and critical infrastructure in contexts of forced displacement, with the goal of improving the prospects of host communities and displaced populations. In her speech, Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, said: "The population census showed that Iraq

enjoys a demographic gift, as 60% of the population is of working age. However, the high unemployment rate among Iraqi youth represents a major challenge. Data from the 2021 Labor Force Survey indicates that youth unemployment rates exceed 35.8%. Launching job search clubs as a national program in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports is a crucial step to bridge the gap between young job seekers and the labour market."

The program's approach involves intensive, two-week coaching sessions where young participants will work with trained facilitators using tailored JSC manuals adapted to the Iraqi context. These sessions will cover essential skills such as resume writing, interview techniques, and navigating job markets. Following the two-week program, participants will receive ongoing support for three months, including regular assessments and guidance on their employment progress.

The program is designed with



inclusivity in mind, specifically targeting marginalized groups such as young women and displaced youth. Special outreach efforts will ensure these groups benefit from the program, addressing the unique challenges they face in accessing the labour market.

Unemployment among Iraqi youth remains a significant challenge, exacerbated by the impacts of conflict, displacement, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent data suggests that unemployment rates among young people in the 15-24 age group exceed 35.8%, with even higher rates among displaced populations.

The PROSPECTS partnership is a strategic four-year global initiative supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the ILO, the partnership includes the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Bank (WB), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), all working together to support host communities and displaced populations across the Arab States, East Africa, and North Africa.

ILO and partners conclude the National Employment Policy draft review workshop

Baghdad, 27 November 2024 - A tripartite workshop to review the draft National Employment Policy was held today in Baghdad, bringing together key stakeholders from the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, trade unions, and employers to discuss and review the draft policy.

Attendees engaged in valuable technical dialogues and interactive sessions to ensure a participatory approach and that the policy meets

national priorities and articulates key strategies for job creation and sustainable employment.

Technical comments from the ILO identified the development and coordination process and the framework for implementing the policy. Discussions and question-and-answer sessions finalized the draft, incorporating valuable stakeholder feedback.

The concluding remarks emphasized

the vision for the future of employment in Iraq and identified the next steps toward adopting and implementing the policy. This workshop highlighted the power of social dialogue and collaboration in formulating a policy to create decent work opportunities for all and improve working conditions across Iraq.

We look forward to further collaboration to shape a brighter future for Iraq's workforce!

Capacity building training of 25 staff members from the new Employment and Labour Market Department in Basra successfully completed

Basra, 28 November 2024 - The ILO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (DOLSA) in Basra, has successfully completing the four days capacity building training of 25 staff members from the new Employment and Labour Market Department.

Staff have been rigorously trained on a new developed comprehensive operations manual, developed through our project, to effectively manage and operate the upcoming Public Employment Services Center in Basra. The training covers all facets of day-to-day operations, from defining roles and responsibilities to streamlining job seekers and stakeholder interactions. With this manual, the Employment and

Labour Market Department is well-prepared to deliver organized and coordinated employment services for Basra's residents, bringing vital support to the community. This initiative is part of the EU-funded

project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis," implemented by UN-HABITAT Iraq in collaboration with the ILO.



ILO, MOLSA and Basra local government proudly sign the "Implementation Procedures Manual"



Basra 02 December 2024 – ILO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and Basra local government proudly signed the "Implementation Procedures Manual for the Departments of Employment and Labour Market".

Developed with the support of the ILO,

this manual is designed to enhance the quality of employment services and career guidance in Basra. It provides comprehensive guidance on daily operations, including clear definitions of roles, responsibilities, and authority, as well as detailed procedures for interacting with clients and

stakeholders. This resource will enable staff to follow standardized processes, improving organizational efficiency and coordination across departments. By strengthening the service delivery for job seekers in Basra, it offers a model that can be replicated in other Iraqi governorates.

In parallel, the ILO is working to establish this department inside the vocational training center in Basra. Also, the project is delivered capacity building training for the staff to reactivate this department and support job seekers in Basra.

This initiative is part of the EU-funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis," implemented by UN-HABITAT Iraq in collaboration with the ILO.

Create a platform to promote sustainable employment, hosting a job fair in Basra

Basra, 03 December 2024 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the local government and UN-Habitat, organized a job fair in Basra today, bringing together over 300 young graduates from ILO training programs, the fair connected participants with potential employers, resources, and knowledge, fostering economic growth through skill

integration and enhancing resilience in the workforce.

With the participation of more than 20 companies and stakeholders from the Directorate of Labour, the local government, and the Chamber of Industry, the event underscored the power of collaboration in addressing unemployment and creating meaningful opportunities for young

people.

The event was graced by the presence of Mr. Hassan Al-Najjar, Deputy Governor of Basra for Labour and Social Affairs, Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Iraq Country Coordinator, and Muslim Qazimi, Head of the UN-Habitat Iraq Program, alongside key partners and stakeholders. Among the activities featured were awareness sessions on

Create a platform to promote sustainable employment, hosting a job fair in Basra *(continued)*



the new Social Security Law, empowering youth with knowledge about their workplace rights and protections and highlighting how this law provides private-sector workers with benefits comparable to those in the public sector. The fair also showcased access to finance opportunities through MOLSA's financial programs, supporting both career aspirations and entrepreneurial ambitions, while financial education session equipped attendees with

knowledge about the programme and applying instructions. Additionally, career guidance session offered practical support using ILO manuals, focusing on career development and working in the green economy.

Dr. Maha Kattaa emphasized the importance of such initiatives, stating that the ILO is deeply committed to empowering youth with the tools they need to succeed in the workforce, connecting them with opportunities, and building the foundation for a more

inclusive and prosperous Iraq.

Deputy Governor Hassan Al-Najjar highlighted the critical role of partnerships between government entities, international organizations, and the private sector, underscoring how collaboration creates pathways to employment and economic growth, giving young people the opportunities they deserve. Muslim Qazimi praised the event's alignment with UN-HABITAT's mission, stating, "UN-HABITAT is committed to creating sustainable cities by enhancing access to services, opportunities, and employment. Events like this job fair are crucial for empowering youth, strengthening urban resilience, and fostering long-term socioeconomic growth in Basra."

This initiative is part of the EU-funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis," implemented by UN-HABITAT Iraq in collaboration with the ILO.

A New Chapter for inclusive employment: launch of the Iraqi National Network for employers interested in empowering and employing persons with disabilities



Baghdad, 07 December 2024 - Under the patronage of His Excellency the Prime Minister, Mr. Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, a significant milestone was achieved in Iraq's journey toward an inclusive labour market. The Iraqi Federation of Industries (IFI), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and with the generous support of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), launched the Iraqi National Network for Employers Interested in Empowering and Employing Persons with Disabilities. The event, hosted at the Iraqi

Federation of Industries in Baghdad, marked the beginning of a new chapter in promoting inclusive and accessible work environments for persons with disabilities across Iraq.

The network offers a range of services to its members, including training and capacity building, technical guidance on workplace accessibility, and opportunities to connect with other like-minded businesses. Through workshops and advisory sessions, the network will help businesses implement inclusive practices and provide a space for employers to exchange best practices.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ahmed Al-Asadi, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, stated: "The launch of the National Iraqi Network for Employers Interested in Empowering and Employing Persons with Disabilities stands as a testament to the Iraqi government's commitment to prioritizing the inclusion of persons with disabilities as a national agenda. This commitment is realized through strengthening partnerships with the private sector, particularly with the Iraqi Federation of Industries, as a key social partner, to encourage companies to create decent job opportunities that promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market and contribute to inclusive development."

The Prime Minister's Advisor for Youth Affairs, Mr. Qasim Al-Zalmi, added: "This network is a clear testament to the fruitful collaboration between the public and private sectors. It is a significant initiative that will positively impact job seekers with disabilities by providing them with suitable employment opportunities. This goal aligns with the government's priorities and is an integral part of its strategies.

A New Chapter for inclusive employment: launch ... (continued)

We will provide all the necessary support to empower the youth of Iraq to enter the labour market, with a particular focus on supporting persons with disabilities."

Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, emphasized, "This initiative is a key step towards creating an inclusive society, where persons with disabilities are empowered to not only seek employment but also become entrepreneurs and active contributors to the economy. The ILO is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all, and this network serves as a model for other countries."

One of the key advantages of the network is its affiliation with the International Labour Organization's "Global Business and Disability Network," based in Geneva. This affiliation provides Iraqi companies with a unique gateway to access global best practices, benefit from innovative tools, and establish connections with international businesses that embrace inclusive approaches and prioritize diversity in the workplace.

Mr. Pierluigi Candier, Head of Economic Development Programme at AICS, representing the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation highlighted the significance of this network, stating, "This initiative embodies Italian Cooperation commitment for a future where economic growth is intertwined with environmental sustainability and

social justice. By empowering persons with disabilities, we are not only promoting inclusivity but also contributing to a more resilient and prosperous society."

The road ahead is one that will require continuous collaboration. The network will not only support businesses but also advocate for policy changes that incentivize the employment of persons with disabilities. Members of the network will work closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to ensure that employers who hire persons with disabilities are recognized and supported through incentives.

The Iraqi National Network's goal is not only to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive work environments but also to ensure that businesses have the tools, knowledge, and support they need to make real, lasting change. With an emphasis on collaboration between employers, civil

society, and government, the network is poised to be a driving force in reshaping the Iraqi labour market.

The launch of the Iraqi National Network for Employers Interested in Empowering and Employing Persons with Disabilities is just the beginning of a transformative journey. Through collaboration, innovation, and commitment, Iraq is one step closer to building an inclusive, sustainable future for all its citizens.

The network, built on the foundation of collaboration, aims to connect employers from various sectors with the resources and guidance necessary to create workplaces that are inclusive, accessible, and supportive of persons with disabilities. The initiative is a key part of the ILO's "Towards More and Better Employment through Enhanced Support to Private Sectors in Southern Iraq – with a Focus on Green Business" project, funded by Italy.



Empowering Green Business in Basra!

Basra, 07 December 2024 - The International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with the Iraqi Federation of Industries (IFI) and with the proud support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), has successfully conducted a 4-day training for MSMEs owners in Basra using the ILO Green Business Guide, developed by ITCILO.

This training reflects the strong partnership in Iraq between ILO, IFI, and AICS, aiming to foster sustainable enterprises that balance profitability with environmental responsibility. By equipping MSME owners with practical tools, this initiative contributes to advancing green practices that benefit businesses, workers, and the planet alike.

The training focused on:

- ✓ Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- ✓ Life cycle management
- ✓ Resource efficiency and cleaner production

✓ Environmental management systems and certification

✓ Green value chains and the circular economy

These efforts are integral to creating decent work opportunities, empowering MSMEs to adopt sustainable practices, and driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth in southern Iraq. Together, we are paving the way for a

greener, fairer, and more prosperous future!

This initiative is part of the project "Towards More and Better Employment through Enhanced Support to Private Sectors in Southern Iraq – with a Focus on Green Business," implemented by the ILO and funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).



Developing first national Single Registry

Baghdad, 13 December 2024 - Hosted by the World Food Programme (WFP), a pivotal workshop recently brought together the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, with support from the European Union, to strengthen Iraq's Social Protection system. Together, they are building a digital

Single Registry that puts people first. Collaboration drives progress. With the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF, and key government leaders, WFP is helping Iraq design its first national Single Registry. A system that ensures no one is left behind—making social protection more inclusive, efficient, and impactful.



ILO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs conclude the workshop on labour inspection in public works programmes in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 December 2024 - The International Labour Organization and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs concluded the specialized workshop on labour inspection in public works programmes in Iraq, with the support of the European Union, which lasted from 3-5 December 2024. The workshop was organized within the framework of the project "Building a Just and Inclusive Transition" funded by the European Union, a major initiative aimed at stimulating decent work opportunities for young men and women and addressing the urgent need for affordable housing in Iraq. The workshop was attended by 25 inspectors and experts from various governorates. The training included enhancing the participants' knowledge of labour legislation, working conditions in public contracts, and occupational safety and health procedures in the construction sector. The workshop also discussed occupational hazard analysis, preparing inspection plans based on sectoral analysis, and developing a specialized occupational safety programme. The workshop focused on enhancing participants' knowledge of the concept of public works and working conditions in public contracts

included in International Labor Convention 94 of 1949, which Iraq ratified in April 1986, and the conditions of those contracts and the protections they include for workers that must be taken into consideration in national legislation and procedures during the contracting period and implementation of those projects. The focus was on analyzing public contracts in the construction sector in Iraq. The interventions required by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in governing and developing the performance of labour inspection to assume responsibility for following up on the terms and conditions of work enforcing

labour legislation in those projects and establishing clear and specific procedures in the field of occupational safety and health in this sector, which is the first sector globally in terms of work injury rates. On the last day, a field visit was conducted to a construction project in Baghdad to apply what was learned practically. The Director General of the Department of Labor and Vocational Training, Mr Osama Al-Khafaji, praised the workshop results, stressing the preparation of a specialized inspection program for 2025 to develop labour inspection policies in the construction sector.



ILO participates in 8th International Arab Guarantees Conference

Baghdad, 18 December 2024 – (ILO News) In light of the National Lending Strategy that has recently been launched by the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI), the International Labour Organization (ILO) participated in the Eighth International Arab Guarantees Conference that was held in Iraq for the first time. The event saw the presence of the CBI, Arab guarantee entities, and Iraqi financial institutions.

The Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees extended invitations to Arab guarantee entities for this significant conference. The event

featured a comprehensive presentation on the Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees, followed by sessions discussing the impact of credit guarantees on economic development and the integration of financial institutions and guarantee companies in conflict areas and innovations in credit guarantee programs.

In his speech, Dr. Ammar Hamad Khalaf, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, emphasized the importance of the conference in promoting cooperation and achieving a comprehensive and sustainable vision of partnership in the banking sector.

He highlighted that the development of the banking sector and the increase in credit availability depend on providing adequate guarantees for SMEs. Dr.



ILO participates in 8th International Arab Guarantees Conference *(continued)*

Khalaf also revealed that the CBI has prepared a diverse strategy to strengthen the capacities of the Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees, including the establishment of a committee from the CBI as a member of the Private Banks League to improve the company's performance.

The ILO focuses on its intervention to the economic development in Iraq on credit guarantees. Currently, the ILO is implementing three projects aim to enhancing access to finance and promoting SMEs across Iraq. These projects include PROSPECTS, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands; the Promotion of the Development of SMEs in Iraq, funded by KfW; and Green Business Promotion, funded by the Italian Agency. Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO

Country Coordinator, stated, "Credit guarantee is the pillar and catalyst for economic growth and job creation, which are part of the Decent Work Country Program in Iraq."

During a panel discussion, Marc Andre Hensel, KfW Office Manager in Iraq, addressed the economic development priorities for Iraq. He emphasized that promoting and developing credit guarantees is essential for enhancing the private sector. "Credit guarantees will allow banks to lend more and risk less, leading to better access to finance opportunities for SMEs," he said.

Mr. Hussein Thamer, the Director General of the Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees, expressed his enthusiasm for the future, stating, "The Iraqi Company for Bank Guarantees is

revealing another chapter with the upcoming collaboration with the ILO Promoting the Development of SMEs in Iraq project. There will be a new version of the ICBG 2.0 in the upcoming phase." This collaboration promises to usher in a new era of enhanced support for SMEs, leveraging innovative strategies and robust frameworks to ensure greater access to finance and sustainable growth for small and medium enterprises across Iraq.

The conference underscored the critical role of credit guarantees in fostering economic stability and growth, particularly in conflict-affected areas, and highlighted the collaborative efforts needed to support SMEs and drive sustainable development in Iraq.

Security Sector Reform

UNODC supports an exchange visit for 14 Iraqi AML/CFT officers to the Financial Intelligence Unit of Spain SEPBLAC

Baghdad, 17 November 2024 - UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime supported an exchange visit for 14 Iraqi representatives of the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Office and relevant stakeholders to the Financial Intelligence Unit of Spain (SEPBLAC) in Madrid. The visit was a great opportunity for the Iraqi and Spanish authorities to get hands-on knowledge on best practices of effective use of financial intelligence, AML/CFT organizational landscape, national and international cooperation, financial investigations of complex ML/TF cases, risk-based supervision, and risk assessments. UNODC also facilitated bilateral meetings on fostering

information exchange on terrorism financing and on international cooperation and assets recovery. The exchange visit has been organized

by UNODC in partnership with UNDP and funded by the USA Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).



USG for Counter-Terrorism Voronkov meets with Iraq NSA Al-Araji

Kuwait, 04 November 2024 - On the sidelines of the "High-Level Conference on Strengthening International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Building Agile Border Security Mechanisms – The Kuwait Phase of the Dushanbe Process" conference, which was recently held in Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, the Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, met with Iraq National Security Advisor, Mr. Qassim Al-Araji. They discussed ongoing cooperation including Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (PRR), and stressed the importance of international cooperation to better protect borders.



Iraq finalizes Standard Operating Procedures for the investigation of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants

Baghdad, 11 November 2024 - Combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants demands a comprehensive, integrated approach across the areas of prosecution, prevention, and protection. Iraq has taken a critical step forward in this regard, finalizing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) designed to strengthen the investigation of such crimes.

Iraqi authorities have developed these SOPs, through partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the European Union (EU) as part of the Global Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT), to equip officials with the essential tools to effectively investigate trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants' cases.

This achievement represents the culmination of years of close collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, specifically the Directorate of Combating Organized Crime, the Directorate of Combating Human Trafficking, and the Training and Rehabilitation Directorate, with direct support from the Supreme Judicial Council and the Ministry of Justice in Baghdad.

During the official handover ceremony at the Training and Rehabilitation Directorate headquarters, the finalized SOPs were presented to relevant authorities, including the General Directors of the Training and Rehabilitation Department, the Director of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division, and the Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Directorate.

"These SOPs will play a crucial role in the training programs for personnel involved in anti-human trafficking efforts, strengthening both national and international initiatives aimed at



eradicating these grave issues. On this occasion, the Ministry of Interior expresses its sincere gratitude to UNODC and the European Union for their invaluable support in the development of the SOPs. Their close cooperation is instrumental in enhancing national capacity and response to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Smuggling of Migrants (SOM)," said Brigadier Mustafa Al-Yasiri, Director of Anti-Human Trafficking Directorate and Head of the Committee responsible for developing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

"The European Union commends the Government of Iraq in its pursuit to further enhance its national response to the trafficking of human beings and the smuggling of migrants, through its strong collaboration with UNODC. In the framework of the EU-funded GLO.ACT initiatives, the handover of the Standard Operating Procedures for investigating officers mark a vital step towards successful conviction of offenders, redressal of victim's grievances and prevention of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants". Said Mr. Lennart Deridder, EU Head of Cooperation.

"The primary goal of these standards is to support law enforcement agencies and partners in the effective investigation of human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases, ensuring

justice is served, perpetrators are convicted, and the rights of victims are protected," said Mr. Ali El Bereir, Senior Programme Coordinator and Head of the UNODC Office in Iraq. Representatives from UNODC and the EU reiterated their continued support for Iraq's comprehensive efforts to strengthen its response to human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

The SOPs were funded by the European Union, under the GLO.ACT (PROTECT) and GLO.ACT Asia and the Middle East initiatives. GLO.ACT (PROTECT) is a 3-year (2023-2026) intervention funded by the European Union, focusing on countering migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (including children) in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. The project focuses on numerous aspects of migration, mobility and forced displacement. The Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants – Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East) was a four-year joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan. GLO.ACT-Bangladesh was a parallel initiative also financed by the EU and implemented by UNODC and IOM.

UNICEF celebrates the launch of the Child-Friendly Court initiative

Baghdad, 13 December 2024 - UNICEF Iraq celebrates the launch of the Child-Friendly Court initiative. This initiative marks a significant milestone in building justice systems designed to protect and support children's rights, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF thanks to the Government of Iraq, the Judicial Council, the German Government, the KfW Development Bank, and other partners for making

this vision a reality. Together, we're building a system where every child's

voice is heard, their rights are protected, and no child is left behind.



Iraq marks International Anti-Corruption Day with civic events to empower youth and promote integrity

Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - Iraq commemorated International Anti-Corruption Day with two events held in Baghdad and Erbil, underscoring the nation's commitment to transparency, accountability, and integrity in governance and highlighting the important role civil society and youth play in creating a future free from corruption.

Organized by the Federal Commission of Integrity, the Kurdistan Region's Integrity Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with support from the European Union, the events gathered government officials, international partners, civil society, artists, media representatives, and youth leaders to reflect on progress and strengthen collaborative efforts to combat corruption.

The events showcased the creative power of youth through interactive activities. In Baghdad, the creation of a public mural symbolized Iraq's fight against corruption. In Erbil, students from the College of Fine Arts, University of Salaheddin co-created an engaging art piece. This initiative demonstrated the power of activism in fostering dialogue and inspiring change.

Tackling Corruption in Iraq

Corruption remains one of Iraq's most formidable challenges, undermining trust in institutions and limiting opportunities for economic growth and development. However, significant strides have been made in recent years, including reforms to judicial processes, the adoption of anti-corruption measures, and the introduction of digital governance frameworks to increase transparency.

Dr. Mohammed Ali Al-Lami, the head of the Federal Commission of Integrity-Republic of Iraq, emphasized the critical role of collaboration in combating corruption, stating in his speech: "We believe in the significance of genuine participation in the fight against corruption while preserving the independence of all cooperating entities. Our aim is to harness national capacities, community organizations, unions, and associations to achieve the noble goal of promoting a culture of integrity and reducing the channels and repercussions of corruption on our country".

Attending the event in Baghdad, in his remarks, EU Ambassador Thomas Seiler reaffirmed the European Union's



commitment to Iraq, stating, "Youth and civil society are the lifeblood of the fight against corruption. With 60% of Iraq's population under the age of 25, young people possess the vision, innovation, and energy to create a future rooted in transparency and integrity. Young people should urgently request the Government and Parliament to adopt anti-corruption laws for their future lives with less bribery and favoritism but more potential for self-determined economic development. By empowering civil society and providing platforms for youth to lead, we not only strengthen accountability but also inspire lasting change. The European Union will continue to support building a corruption-free Iraq where trust and opportunity thrive."

"To effectively combat corruption, we must strengthen institutions, empower the judiciary, and enact transformative laws like the Access to Information Law. Transparency and accountability are the cornerstones of progress, and by prioritising them, we can build trust, safeguard public resources, and create an Iraq where youth, the future of this country, can enjoy equal rights and opportunities. The UN stands ready to support Iraq in this crucial endeavour." Stated DSRSG/HC/RC Ghulam Isaczi in his opening remarks at the event in Baghdad.

Youth Leading the Way

The theme for International Anti-Corruption Day 2024, "Empowering Youth to Lead the Fight Against Corruption," resonated strongly in Iraq, where 60% of the population is under 25. Young Iraqis are at the forefront of the battle against corruption, equipped with innovative ideas and a desire for a transparent future.

Iraq's youth-led momentum against corruption was exemplified by last year's award-winning #PasstheBaton campaign. Launched during International Anti-Corruption Day 2023, the campaign achieved over 65 million views within 10 days and was recognized as the Best Non-Profit Campaign in the MENA region. The campaign's success highlighted the willingness of Iraq's youth to take an active role in demanding accountability and transparency.

UNDP, with generous funding from the European Union, has been a steadfast partner in Iraq's journey to curb corruption. UNDP's initiatives have supported the development of robust governance systems, empowered civil society, and trained investigative journalists to act as watchdogs. Notable achievements include the launch of digital tools for monitoring public sector activities and the development of corruption risk management strategies.



DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai: “The United Nations continues to work closely with the Government of Iraq and international partners to combat corruption and bring it to an end.”



Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - On International Anti-Corruption Day, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, emphasized that transparency and accountability are key to progress. By prioritizing them, Iraq can build trust, safeguard resources, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for its youth. The United Nations is committed to supporting this goal.

Here is the text of Mr. Isaczai speech:

“Your Excellency Dr. Mohammed Ali Al-Lami, Head of the Federal Commission of Integrity;

Your Excellency Thomas Seiler, Ambassador of the European Union; Distinguished representatives and guests;

It is a privilege to welcome you all to this special event commemorating International Anti-Corruption Day. This day is a powerful reminder of the profound impact corruption has on the lives of individuals, societies, and nations.

Corruption in Iraq remains a significant obstacle to the country’s development and stability, impacting the effective functioning of institutions and the delivery of essential services.

The United Nations continues to work closely with the Government of Iraq and international partners to combat corruption and bring it to an end.

In recent years, with the support of UNDP and UNODC, the government has made significant progress in strengthening the policy and institutional framework to combat corruption. These efforts include judicial and anti-money laundering reforms, the adoption of key legal measures to improve the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases, enhanced transparency within government agencies, and the empowerment of civil society and the

media to report corruption.

This year’s International Anti-Corruption Day focusing on the role of young people in the fight against corruption, is particularly significant. Corruption does not just erode the integrity of public institutions; it also undermines the dreams and aspirations of young people, and limits their opportunities in education, employment, and civic engagement.

Young people are not just victims of corruption - they are powerful agents of change with the potential to transform society. In Iraq, where 60% of the population is under the age of 25, the youth hold the tools, technologies, and dedication to build a brighter future for this country. Their energy and creativity demonstrate that the possibilities are endless, and the future truly lies in their hands.

We witnessed this potential firsthand through the #PassTheBaton campaign against corruption, which garnered over 65 million views in less than 10 days last year. This award-winning initiative earned global and regional recognition, showcasing the remarkable impact young people can achieve.

However, as we gather today to reflect on the progress made in fighting corruption, we must also remember that the fight is far from over.

Addressing corruption in Iraq requires comprehensive reforms to strengthen institutions, enforce accountability, and improve transparency. International support and civil society engagement will be critical in driving these efforts forward.

At this point, I would like to emphasize that the fight against corruption and the promotion of integrity are central principles in the guidance of Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani, as was highlighted in the meeting between His Eminence and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Dr. Mohamed Al-Hasan.

To effectively tackle corruption in Iraq, we must focus on three critical priorities. First, strengthening institutional frameworks and promoting transparency are vital. This involves enhancing governance structures, reforming public procurement processes to eliminate favoritism, and ensuring the transparent management of oil revenues. These steps will create a system where accountability is prioritized, and public resources are safeguarded.

Second, empowering the judiciary to prosecute corruption cases effectively is essential. A strong, independent judiciary, free from political interference and intimidation, is key to holding public officials accountable and addressing widespread practices such as bribery and extortion.

Finally, enacting laws such as the Access to Information Law is a crucial milestone on the path to greater transparency and accountability. This law will empower citizens, support civil society and the media, and strengthen trust in public institutions. I urge political leaders and parliament to prioritize this law, demonstrating their commitment to meaningful progress and reform.

I can confidently say that all UN agencies in Iraq, including UNDP and UNODC, stand ready to assist the Government and the people of Iraq in this endeavor. As UN agencies focused on development, we recognize that our efforts would be ineffective without addressing corruption, as it permeates every aspect of society and directly impacts the success of our work.

We are equally confident in the commitment of our partners, including the EU, to support the continued success of this vital work, alongside the Federal Commission of Integrity, led by His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Ali Al-Lami. I look forward to seeing our efforts strengthened and sustained as we move forward together.

I would also like to thank all members of civil society, the media, and the art community, particularly the Basmate Almel initiative for joining us today and co-creating this celebration. Let’s remember that art is a powerful form of expression, conveying our message creatively and more effectively.

On behalf of the United Nations in Iraq, I thank you all for your commitment to this cause. Let us continue to work together - united in our vision of a corruption-free world where the next generation can thrive and build a better future for all.

UNCCT Weapons programme helps Iraq to prepare and respond to biological terrorist threats

Amman, Jordan, 17 December 2024

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) Weapons programme recently held its first in a series of three train-the-trainer courses in Jordan to help Iraq prepare and respond to biological terrorist threats. The next session will enhance their expertise on prevention and response to nuclear and biological terrorist attacks. The UNCCT Weapons programme course on Biological Threats for 26 Iraqi officials concluded with an immersive TTX-based scenario, putting into practice lessons on developing risk assessment and management plans, crime scene sampling, evidence collection and integrating labs processes

Through the UNOCT Weapons programme train-the-trainer course on

Biological Threats, Iraqi Officers gained knowledge on enhancing first responder safety, managing biohazard

scenes and fostering multi-agency coordination during biological incidents.



Consultative discussion on KRG's efforts in combating terrorism

Erbil, 23 December 2024 – The Director of the Baghdad Office of the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), Zeeshan Amin, accompanied by two Programme Management Officers, met today with the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Coordinator of International Advocacy, Dr. Dindar Zebari. They discussed KRG's efforts in combating terrorism, as well as future collaboration.

Photos courtesy of KRG.



Mine Action

UNMAS Iraq and implementing partner SHO host a monitoring visit from representatives of the Government of Denmark

Mosul, 11 November 2024 - UNMAS Iraq and implementing partner Shareteah Humanitarian Organization (SHO) hosted a monitoring visit from representatives of the Government of Denmark operations sites in Ninewa. The visitors observed an Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) session for school children in Batnaya, Tel Kaif and visited a clearance site at Al-Shifa Hospital Complex in Mosul. UNMAS collaborates closely with Iraq's national mine action authority, the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), to help reduce the impact of explosive ordnance on affected communities. UNMAS Iraq's EORE activities and clearance operations are conducted in

priority areas identified by the DMA. UNMAS extends its gratitude to the Government of Denmark for its

invaluable support towards the protection of civilians and stabilization efforts in Iraq.





Baghdad, 25 November 2024 - Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, met today with the **First Secretary, Meik Laufer**, at the Embassy of Germany in Baghdad. Lodhammar provided an overview of the UNMAS Iraq operations and discussed achievements and plans. UNMAS Iraq would like to express its appreciation for the support provided by the Government of Germany in the past and look forward to future collaboration.



Baghdad, 12 December 2024 - Today, Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme met with Major General **Mr. Muhsim Kadhum**, Director General of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Civil Defense Directorate, in Baghdad. Pehr Lodhammar provided an overview on UNMAS Iraq engagement with MoI and discussed future cooperation with the Civil Defense. UNMAS Iraq extends its deepest gratitude to the MoI for over the years' collaboration and looks forward to continued collaboration.

UNMAS and partners aim to advance women's participation in the Iraqi mine action sector

Baghdad, 05 December 2024 - UNMAS Iraq recently held a workshop titled "The Role of Women in Mine Action and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education" at the Iraqi Directorate for Mine Action in Baghdad.

Also, UNMAS Iraq, in collaboration with the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) and humanitarian mine action organizations, organized a similar workshop in Erbil. The participants shared their experiences, challenges, success stories, and contributions to reaching at-risk women and children.

UNMAS Iraq extends its gratitude to its donors and for their generous and continuous support, which enable efforts to advance women's participation in the Iraqi mine action sector.



UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme meets with the acting Director General of the Directorate for Mine Action

Baghdad, 16 December 2024 - Today, Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, met with the acting Director General of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), Mr. Faris Thabit. During the meeting, Lodhammar provided an update on UNMAS Iraq operations and activities planned for 2025.

UNMAS Iraq expresses its gratitude to the DMA and the Iraqi Ministry of Environment and looks forward to continued collaboration in supporting an Iraq free from explosive ordnance.



UNMAS Iraq and MoI celebrate the graduation of ten qualified Iraqi officers from the “Train-of-Trainers Awareness Training” course

Baghdad, 19 December 2024 - Today, UNMAS Iraq celebrated at the Iraqi Ministry of Interior the graduation of ten qualified Iraqi officers from the “Train-of-Trainers Awareness Training” course in Baghdad. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, emphasized the critical role of Iraqi women and men police officers in protecting the communities they serve. Lodhammar complimented the graduated women and men police officers and praised their readiness, motivation and bravery to support Iraqi communities and Iraqi civilians.



UNMAS supports a roundtable discussion to review and update the National Mine Action Standards

Baghdad, 24 December 2024 - In December 2024, the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), with support from UNMAS Iraq, participated in roundtable discussions to review and update the National Mine Action Standards. UNMAS Iraq appreciates the two authorities’ efforts and dedication to regularly update the national standards and guidelines to advance safety and efficiency in mine action operations. We would also like to

extend our gratitude to our donors for their invaluable support in strengthening mine action systems and procedures across Iraq.



Healthcare

UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 31 October 2024 - With UNFPA support, Ministry of Health held a workshop to assess emergency readiness for essential reproductive health services. Working with key ministries, international organizations, and local partners, we're committed to ensuring access and strengthening coordination.

WHO Iraq and UNICEF support the Ministry of Health to develop the School Health Strategy

Baghdad, 25 November 2024 – WHO Iraq together with UNICEF and other partners supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop the School Health Strategy 2024 – 2030. The framework document was launched at the MoH under the auspices of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education! Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo, WHO Representative in Iraq said: “Grateful with students and colleagues to launch Iraq School Health Strategy by Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. The holistic strategy

addresses pupils health, wellbeing and related determinants. WHO Iraq and partners continue to support Iraq Government.”



WHO on X

Baghdad, 6 November 2024 - World Health Organization (WHO) Iraq Representative, Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo: "Grateful for an insightful meeting with the Hon. Mme. Layla Alkhafaji. We envisioned health at the core of humanitarian, peace and development nexus and key to accelerating and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (#SDGs)".



WHO partnership helps to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Iraq

Erbil, 26 November 2024 - When Roses' mother decided to celebrate her first birthday at the refurbished neonatal unit of Erbil Maternity Hospital, it was a gesture filled with profound significance. After a long and hopeful wait of over fifteen years to conceive, she faced disappointment on the day of delivery. Her precious bundle of joy arrived prematurely at 28 weeks, weighing only 800 grams, with a respiratory distress symptom, necessitating specialized care during those critical hours.

Rose now thrives with health and vitality, reflecting the journey of Bareen, one of the first beneficiaries of this state-of-the-art infant center. Born at just 26 weeks and weighing only 900 grams, she was meticulously monitored in the intensive care unit for 48 days before being moved to the Kangaroo Care room. Her dad, a physician at the same hospital told the story.

Dedicated Care: Transforming Lives Through Advanced Technology
Reducing neonatal mortality and deaths of children under five is a top priority in the Sustainable Development Goals. In Iraq, this accounts for over 50% of under-five fatalities. However, many premature births and complications can be prevented with high-quality, evidence-

based interventions before, during, and immediately after pregnancy and childbirth.

Thanks to strategic partnerships between WHO Iraq and the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), and with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) of the U.S. State Department, the challenges the hospital faced in handling complex cases such as the lack of essential equipment like the Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) ventilators, infant incubators, and infusion pumps are now part of history.

Revitalized Surgical Unit: Ensuring Safe Deliveries

Such impactful transformations and capacity-building among medical staff have slashed the neonatal mortality rate from 6.2% in 2021 to a staggering

1.1% in 2024.

In 2017, the Iraqi Ministry of Health reported that the top causes of maternal mortality were hemorrhage, pre-eclampsia/eclampsia, and uterine rupture—one of the challenges Negiz faced during her last pregnancy.

Strategic Partnerships: Building Healthier Futures

Prioritizing maternal and neonatal care is not only about saving lives but also fostering the growth of healthier generations to come.

Access the video at: <https://bit.ly/4a20wGz>

Written by Celia Thompson Dadson (UNAMI SCPIO) with contributions from Dr. Ajyal Mansour (WHO) Translations by Rashwan Salih, Ihsan Barzanji and Nafea Azeez (UNAMI SCPIO)



WHO and partners raise awareness of critical importance of responsible antibiotic use

Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a significant health challenge in Iraq, threatening the effectiveness of life-saving medicines, endangering lives, and increasing healthcare costs.

As part of the World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) celebrations, the World Health Organization in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the American University of Iraq - Baghdad (AUIB), organized an

interactive session with students of medical colleges. This engaging activity highlighted the critical importance of responsible antibiotic use and empowered the youth to take action in the fight against AMR. Together, we are building a united and informed response to safeguard health for generations to come!



WHO Iraq gathers national stakeholders to develop country cooperation strategy aligned with Agenda 2030



Baghdad, 28 November 2024 – The World Health Organization Country Office in Iraq held a two-day consultative meeting on 27-28 November 2024, bringing together high-level national stakeholders to chart the course for WHO’s new Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) in Iraq. This strategic framework will guide WHO’s support to Iraq over the coming years, emphasizing alignment with Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

The event was attended by representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary Health and Environment Committee, the Ministry of Health, the Religious Endowments, and key national institutions. Senior officials from UN agencies, including World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and IOM, also participated, underscoring the United Nations’ collaborative commitment to Iraq’s health sector transformation.

The CCS serves as a vital guidance platform to promote health, prevent risks, and ensure equitable, people-centered services, aiming at Universal

Health Coverage (UHC). Central to its development is the engagement of government entities, civil society, and other key stakeholders, whose collective efforts will shape an inclusive and impactful strategy.

Dr. Georges Ki-Zerbo, WHO Representative in Iraq, underscored this collaborative approach, stating, “Sustainable health outcomes can only be achieved through the full ownership, stewardship, and commitment of the government and the active participation of private sector and non-state actors, including civil society. The Country Cooperation Strategy reflects this unifying vision, prioritizing evidence, innovation, equity, resilience, localization, sustainability, and accountability.”

The Role of Government and Civil Society in Driving Health Progress

The involvement of Iraq’s government is critical to ensuring that health system reforms align with national development priorities and global commitments. High-level representatives, including those from the Office of the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary Health and Environment Committee, and the Ministry of Health, played a leading role in shaping the discussions on

governance, financing, and institutional capacity strengthening to achieve UHC.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) contributed significantly by representing diverse communities and ensuring the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations in the CCS. Their on-the-ground insights and advocacy are essential for addressing social determinants of health, reducing inequities, and fostering community ownership of health initiatives.

Key Themes and Discussions

The two-day consultation explored the following priority areas:

- Strengthening health system governance to enhance accountability and leadership.
- Expanding universal health coverage to improve access to quality health services.
- Addressing social determinants of health and reducing inequities, particularly for women, children, and vulnerable groups.
- Building resilience against emergencies and climate change impacts.

Alignment with Agenda 2030 and UNSDCF

The CCS supports Iraq’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). It is also closely linked to the UNSDCF, ensuring coordinated multi-sectoral efforts to address the health challenges facing Iraq and its population.

The outcomes of this consultative process will shape the CCS, ensuring it is a comprehensive and inclusive framework to guide WHO, the UN system, and Iraq’s collaborative efforts toward a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous future.

WHO EMRO Regional Director visits Baghdad

Baghdad, 14 December 2024 - WHO EMRO Regional Director, Ms. Hanan Balkhy: "It was a privilege to visit Baghdad for the first time to participate in the 61st Regular Session of the Council of Arab Health Ministers.

During my visit, I had the honour of meeting Iraq’s Minister of Health H.E. Dr. Salih Al Hassnawi and his team, reflecting on Iraq’s significant health achievements. From reducing maternal and child mortality to expanding vaccination digitalizing health information and establishing

specialized medical centers for cancer and other diseases, Iraq has made remarkable progress despite the challenges.

We also discussed Iraq’s priorities moving forward, including enhancing national pharmaceutical production, scaling up primary health care, strengthening health insurance, and improving health infrastructure as part of the World Health Organization (WHO)’s new country cooperation strategy 2025-2030."



WHO participates at the 61st regular session of the Council of Arab Health Ministers

Baghdad, 15 December 2024 - The 61st regular session of the Council of Arab Health Ministers concluded successfully in Baghdad on 12 December 2024 - with focus on emergencies and advancing Health Systems across the Arab region. The

World Health Organization (WHO) addressed the conference and was represented by Dr. Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO EMRO). Dr. Balkhy emphasized the collaboration among Arab countries to

strengthen and support humanitarian efforts in Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen, and enhance digital health systems and maternal and child health.

"The 61st Council of Arab Health Ministers in Baghdad brought together health leaders and partners to address urgent health challenges. I was pleased to see regional initiatives endorsed at the meeting aligning with WHO's regional priorities and my flagship initiatives, including scaling up self-reliance for medical supplies, addressing substance use, strengthening maternal and child health services and health financing, and antimicrobial resistance and digital health," said Ms. Balkhy.

The World Health Organization (WHO) remains committed to working hand in hand with countries to strengthen health systems, improving health



Investing in a resilient community health system and training frontline health workers can transform Iraq

Baghdad, 20 December 2024 - Community health workers in Iraq have to overcome significant challenges to deliver health services to remote and underserved communities. By supporting and empowering these frontline heroes UNICEF ensures that every child's fundamental right to quality healthcare is upheld.

Investing in a resilient community health system and training frontline health workers can transform Iraq by lowering child deaths and building healthy communities capable of contributing to a better future.



National Census

UNFPA is providing crucial technical expertise for the national census

Baghdad, 18 November 2024 - Today, UNFPA led the Advisory Committee Meeting before the census, with the dedicated presence of the Iraqi Minister of Planning.

UNFPA is providing crucial technical expertise to uphold international standards.

"On behalf of UNFPA, I want to express our strong commitment to supporting the Government of Iraq in this crucial national initiative. The census represents a cornerstone of development planning, and UNFPA is proud to be a technical partner in this endeavor," said Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Representative a.i. in Iraq.



First census in over three decades begins in Iraq, backed by UNFPA expertise

Baghdad, 20 November 2024 – Today marks a historic milestone as Iraq launches its first national population and household census in over three decades. This census is a pivotal moment for the country, providing comprehensive and accurate data to inform development policies and address the needs of its people.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reaffirms its commitment to supporting the Government of Iraq in this landmark initiative. Through its technical and operational expertise, UNFPA ensures the census adheres to the highest international standards, setting the stage for transformative development planning.

Censuses have played a crucial role in Iraq's development planning since the early 20th century. The first comprehensive census was conducted in 1927, followed by several subsequent enumerations, the last of which took place in 1987. For over three decades, political and security challenges have prevented Iraq from conducting a full-scale census, leaving policymakers to

rely on outdated data.

The 2024 census represents a significant breakthrough, leveraging advanced digital technologies to ensure comprehensive coverage, including marginalized and hard-to-reach populations such as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Highlighting the importance of collaboration, Iraq's Minister of Planning, Dr. Mohammed Ali Tamim, stated: "The census is a transformative project that shapes the vision for Iraq's future. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) stands as a key partner in this landmark development initiative, aligned with United Nations recommendations. We are fully committed to upholding international standards, leveraging modern technology, and ensuring that the census results and the data collected serve as a foundation for informed decision-making and inclusive development."

Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Representative a.i in Iraq, added: "The census is more than just numbers; it is

a roadmap for Iraq's future. UNFPA is committed to helping Iraq leverage this opportunity to develop policies that serve all citizens."

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is dedicated to providing comprehensive technical support to the Government of Iraq for the implementation of the census. Committed to ensuring adherence to international standards by deploying a diverse team of high-level international experts and enhancing data quality and protection throughout the census process. This support is part of UNFPA's global approach to advancing population censuses.

This census represents a historic milestone for Iraq, providing a comprehensive database that will inform policies responsive to citizens' needs and foster economic and social development.

In the post-census stage, UNFPA will continue its support by assisting the government in interpreting and utilizing the data to inform national policies and development strategies.

UN Iraq Special Representative commends population census in Iraq



Baghdad, 20 November 2024 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, commended today the conduct of the first population census in Iraq in 37 years, stressing its importance for future development plans and projects in the country.

This came during a visit with His Excellency Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani to the Operations Center for the Population Census at the Ministry of Planning, where the Prime Minister and the SRSG were briefed in detail about the process today and

tomorrow as well as the methods of data collection and updates. Present at the briefing was the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, Dr. Mohammed Tamim.

Dr. Al Hassan lauded the conduct of the process and the huge government efforts to make it a success. "This is a historic phase for Iraq. What we have witnessed today are important steps for the future of Iraq. This census is aimed towards development. The progress of states depends primarily on census. The professionalism we have seen today confirms confidence in the process and the seriousness in its implementation, with UNFPA's technical cooperation."

Dr. Al Hassan appreciated the efforts of staff working on the ground and UNFPA's advice and technical assistance to make the process a success. He urged everyone to participate and cooperate for the benefit of Iraq and its people.

"This census is to ensure rights, access to public services, the equitable distribution of resources among different regions, and planning based on scientific and modern criteria. On my behalf and on behalf of the United Nations, we congratulate you and wish you success for a better Iraq."



United Nations Iraq congratulates population census success, reaffirms commitment to supporting Iraq's development plans



Baghdad, 25 November 2024 – The United Nations in Iraq congratulated the Government and people of Iraq on the completion of a successful population census with the announcement of its preliminary results, underscoring the significance of the outcome to future national economic and social development policies and strategies aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit of all Iraqis. “To have a census after 37 years throughout Iraq was not an easy feat,

and to uphold international standards and leverage modern technology throughout the process was a significant achievement”, said Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

This success would not have been possible if it was not for the huge efforts made by His Excellency Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Planning, Dr. Mohammed Tamim, and the government teams, in close collaboration with UNFPA Iraq.

Dr. Tamim: “The census is the compass for developmental planning in Iraq, providing an accurate depiction of the demographic reality and the diverse needs of the people. The announcement of preliminary census results represents a crucial step toward building a strong and cohesive Iraq, enabling decision-makers to make well-informed decisions based on reliable facts and figures.”

The United Nations is pleased to have supported the process through critical technical assistance and advice of UN Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA stands ready to continue to support the Government of Iraq in interpreting, analysing and utilizing the data to inform national policies and development strategies.

The United Nations in Iraq reaffirms its support to Iraq's development agenda to advance the country towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

UN Iraq Special Representative commends population census in Iraq



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DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai: “Proud to announce UN Iraq support to the Iraqi delegation to COP29 and organizing side events at the Iraqi Pavilion in Baku.”

Baghdad, 03 November 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam M. Isaczai: "Participated in diplomatic briefing session this morning organized by Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment about Iraq's Vision for #COP29. Proud to announce UN Iraq support to the Iraqi delegation to COP29 and organizing side events at the Iraqi Pavilion in Baku. Environment 1st!"



Iraq and UNDP discuss cooperation on climate action and humanitarian aid at COP29

Baku, Azerbaijan, 11 November 2024 – During the United Nations Climate Conference (COP29) in Baku, President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid met Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), to discuss their shared commitment to climate action, sustainable development and humanitarian response.



At COP 29, President Rashid urges bold global action on climate change and peace efforts in the Middle East

Baku, Azerbaijan, 12 November 2024 — Iraq's President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid attended the United Nations Climate Summit (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, where he was warmly welcomed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Presidency.



President Rashid and UN Chief Guterres address Middle East Peace and global climate action at COP29

Baku, Azerbaijan, 13 November 2024 — At the United Nations Climate Summit (COP29), President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid held a productive meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. They discussed pressing international issues, particularly focusing on regional stability and climate action.

Photo courtesy of the Media office of the Iraqi Presidency.



President Rashid participates in a discussion panel during the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku

Baku, Azerbaijan, 13 November 2024 - President of the Republic of Iraq Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid participated in a discussion panel during the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku. The session was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) under the theme, "Accelerating Climate Action Finance for Resilient Agricultural and Food Systems in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries." The panel focused on the devastating effects of climate change

and the urgent need for action to protect food security and livelihoods.

Photo courtesy of the Media office of the Iraqi Presidency.



Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani takes part in COP29

Baku, Azerbaijan, 13 November 2024 - Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani arrived in Baku on Monday at the official invitation of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. On Tuesday the President took part in the opening ceremony of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku.



IOM on X

Baku, Azerbaijan, 14 November 2024 - COP29 | Director General of International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ms. Amy Pope: "Insightful exchange with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Fuad Hussein. Iraq's support for integrating human mobility into climate adaptation efforts is crucial. Together we can strengthen resilience and accelerate proactive solutions for those most at risk."



WHO Iraq participates at COP29

Baku, Azerbaijan, 15 November 2024 - The World Health Organization (WHO) and Ministry of Health highlight the relationship between climate change and health through pioneering national initiatives. At COP29, Dr. Georges Ki-Zerbo, the WHO Representative in Iraq, highlighted the remarkable leadership and commitment of the Iraqi government in addressing climate change. WHO Iraq Representative Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo: "Gratitude following an insightful conversation on climate change and health in Iraq."



Iraq in COP29 – champions despite the challenges



Baku, Azerbaijan, 15 November 2024 - The Conference of the Parties (COP) is no longer just an annual summit on climate issues; it has become a critical item on the agendas of many nations, especially for those most affected, like Iraq. This is underscored by the high priority the Iraqi Ministry of Environment places on this event in its annual plan. This year, the 29th Climate Conference will be held in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

As the Iraqi President stepped into the COP this week for the third time, his presence reflected Iraq's commitment to addressing the global climate crisis—even amid current regional challenges and internal recovery needs that might otherwise seem more pressing. Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, has reiterated this commitment through his continuous guidance and support, making participation in the conference a priority within the government's agenda.

But why this commitment? Iraqis, especially those in the southern and central regions, have felt firsthand the

impacts of climate change through unprecedented heat waves, severe water scarcity, and a drastic reduction in agricultural resources. These factors make Iraq's future and its livability dependent on a swift response to climate change, making Iraq's participation in the conference a clear testament to its foresight on this critical issue.

Iraq's climate change story is a challenging one, with Iraqis bearing the cost at every step. With a population approaching 43 million, the pressure on resources has increased, and each summer is hotter than the last, with temperatures exceeding 50°C. Studies indicate that the Mesopotamian basin, the cradle of civilization, could become uninhabitable if global temperatures continue to rise at the rate they currently do. Iraq also faces water shortages due to decreased flows in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers—a critical challenge, as about 70% of Iraq's fresh water depends on these rivers. These factors, combined with Iraq's location and ongoing crises, place it among the most climate-affected countries.

However, Iraq's participation in recent COPs has been far from passive. At COP28, Iraq not only attended but also had its own pavilion, organized notable sessions, and drew significant, unexpected attention. This year, at COP29 in Baku, Iraq is seemingly replicating that success, strengthening its role through substantial representation. This is clearly not be a

conventional participation, as Iraq was elected just a few months ago to represent the Arab Group in the key technical negotiations on climate change in Bonn, Germany—a significant achievement.

As a representative of the Arab group, Iraq is advocating for key topics central to its needs and those of the region. Two Iraqi delegates, Ms. Raghda Talal Al-Dawoodi and Dr. Mohammed Jabbar Ajrash, will lead critical discussions on climate change and maritime transport. This role enhances Iraq's voice and brings the country's challenges and proposed solutions to the global stage. The Iraqi government's actions clearly show that addressing climate change is not just a policy for Iraq—it has become a matter of survival.

UNDP has been a steadfast ally in Iraq's climate journey. Since Iraq joined the Paris Agreement in 2021, UNDP has supported the government by assisting in the development of its nationally determined contributions, training the negotiating delegation, and working alongside the government, particularly the Ministry of Environment, during Iraq's previous COP participations, and will continue to do so this year. This support has strengthened Iraq's ability to confront environmental threats and chart a resilient path forward. Highlighting Iraq's role at COP29 is a crucial step that reflects the country's transformation from a nation surviving conflicts to an exceptional climate advocate for the region's future.

From COP29 - pathways for climate investment in Iraq

Baku, Azerbaijan, 18 November 2024 - UNDP is actively supporting Iraq's participation at COP29 in Baku through its long-term collaboration with the government of Iraq. The importance of aligning climate projection with economic growth projection was discussed during the Finance, Investment and Trade Day in the session "Pathways for Climate Investment in Iraq: Transitional Phase I (2025–2030)." The event presented the findings of a study supported by USAID that examines the impact of climate change on Iraq's economy and provides avenues to diversify economic development of the country while enhancing climate resilience and fostering strategic partnerships.

The expert discussions that followed centered on a phased approach to climate mitigation and adaptation beginning with key transitional priority

investments during the period 2025–2030 that overcomes sector-specific vulnerabilities and the introduction of diversified clean energy sources, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive investment strategy to be implemented from 2030–2050.

Panelists emphasized the current opportunities to diversify Iraq's economy in conjunction with the strengthening of critical infrastructures in essential services such as water, energy, food, and housing. The dialogue further highlighted the role of public-private partnerships in scaling up investment opportunities aligned with Iraq's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement.

The panel which featured Amb. Fareed Yasseen (Until recently Iraq's Climate Envoy and a former Senior Official at the UN Climate Change Secretariat),

Dr. Haider Makkiyah (Chairman, National Investment Commission), Ms. Bayan Abdulrahman (Advisor to KRG PM), Mr. Mohammed Al-Najjar (Chairman of the Iraq Development Fund, Investment Advisor to the Prime Minister) and Mr. Auke Lootsma (UNDP Resident Representative) specifically addressed the necessity of multi-stakeholder collaboration and actionable pathways for a just and fair climate-resilient transformation of Iraq's economy.



Iraq at COP29: advancing climate action and sustainability

Baghdad, 27 November 2024 - The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, which concluded 22 November 2024, was an opportunity for Iraq to significantly contribute to global climate discussions and advance its national priorities on building climate resilience. Supported by UN agencies through enhancing capacities and logistical support, Iraq highlighted its efforts toward resilience and a green transformation, reinforcing its dedication to a sustainable future.

Iraq's pavilion: Showcasing innovation and collaboration

For the second consecutive year, Iraq hosted its own pavilion at the COP29. During the pavilion's inauguration, President Abdul Latif Rashid emphasized its role as a platform for fostering international collaboration to achieve shared climate goals. The pavilion featured over 40 side events highlighting

innovative climate initiatives across Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, such as advancement in low-carbon technologies, water resource management, and strategies for a green economic transition. Iraq used this platform to highlight its progress in National Adaptation Plans to combat extreme heat, desertification, and water scarcity. These measures align with broader regional goals for sustainable resource management and reflect Iraq's commitment to supporting its most vulnerable communities.

Iraq's negotiation team: Promoting progress on Paris Agreement goals

Iraq's negotiation team, trained with UN support, played an important role in advancing discussions to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, including finalizing the agreement on Article 6 regarding carbon markets. The team's efforts emphasized the importance of balancing economic growth with

environmental sustainability, advocating for equitable climate financing, and strengthening resilience against climate-induced challenges.

Empowering Iraq's youth: Leading the charge at COP29

With support from the Prime Minister's Office, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and UN agencies, young delegates served as the voice of Iraq's future at COP29. They brought forward innovative ideas and practical solutions to the global climate dialogue, reflecting the aspirations of the country's youth. Beyond their active participation in the Iraqi pavilion, these young leaders conducted sessions across various pavilions, spotlighting Iraq's potential in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and climate adaptation. Their contributions underscored the critical importance of empowering youth to lead and take ownership of climate action.

UN-Habitat actively participates in COP16 in Riyadh

Riyadh, KSA, 06 December 2024 - UN-Habitat, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), Hayat Wildlife Conservation Group and 3N Biotech joined the COP16 Riyadh side event to discuss recent advancements in monitoring sand and dust storms (SDS) and applying nature-based solutions (NbS) to combat desertification.

Sand and dust storms are a significant issue in the Arab region, posing health risks, worsening desertification, and impacting ecosystems, agriculture, and economies across borders.

The panel emphasised the importance of transboundary collaboration to address SDS and desertification

through science, NbS, and joint action, so the results can be more effective and sustainable.

The discussion also highlighted the need to support local and national authorities in developing strategies to

tackle environmental challenges and improve land management.

Effective coordination and targeted solutions are trends to mitigating impacts and addressing the root causes of SDS at their source.



At COP16 Riyadh, UN-Habitat leads an engaging discussion

Riyadh, KSA, 09 December 2024 - UN-Habitat led an engaging discussion titled "Navigating the Storm: Understanding the Impact of Sand and Dust Storms in the Region," shedding light on the transboundary nature of SDS and their sweeping impacts on air quality, public health, agriculture, regional stability, and climate displacement.

The session, conducted by Mohamed Nassar, UN-Habitat Iraq Programme Manager, brought together experts, including Dr. Jassim Abdulaziz Hamadi and Dr. Najla Mohsen Al-Waeli from the Ministry of Environment, Mr. Khaled Waleed from the Ministry of Housing, Dr. Basem Alghrabi from the Iraqi Parliament, and UN-Habitat Iraq's head, Mr. Muslim Qazimi. Their contributions provided a comprehensive look at the

ongoing efforts to combat SDS in southern Iraq. From the pressing health risks outlined by Dr. Hamadi to the infrastructure challenges raised by Dr. Alghrabi, the discussion revealed the wide-reaching effects of SDS on essential services and human well-being.

Dr. Al-Waeli drew attention to the devastating loss of biodiversity in Iraq's

iconic Marshlands, underscoring the urgent need for ecological preservation. Meanwhile, Mr. Waleed highlighted the critical role of resilient urban planning in mitigating these environmental threats. Mr. Qazimi showcased innovative, nature-based solutions that hold promise for addressing desertification and SDS impacts across the Arab region.

The dialogue reinforced the need for unified regional action, sustainable investments, and a commitment to ecosystem restoration to reduce the long-term impacts of SDS. With a blend of science, policy, and innovation, the session demonstrated that solutions are within reach to build resilience and safeguard the environment for future generations.



UN-Habitat hosts another side event at COP16 on transboundary sand and dust storms

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 11 December 2024 – Yesterday at COP16 in Riyadh, UN-Habitat held the side event, “Building Resilience Against Transboundary Sand and Dust Storms: Lessons from Iraq and Kuwait,” highlighting how international

cooperation is tackling the growing threat of sand and dust storms across borders.

A special thanks to all participants and experts who joined us, especially Dr. Michal Mlynár, UN-Habitat Deputy Executive Director, who opened the

session by emphasizing the significance of the discussion and the widespread impact of sand and dust storms—one of the most urgent environmental challenges in the region and globally.

“Climate hazards and natural catastrophes know no borders. That’s why we must work together, unify approaches, and recognize the critical role of international cooperation,” he remarked.

The discussion covered sustainable land-use practices, ecosystem restoration, and capacity-building efforts in Southern Iraq and Kuwait.

The full session is available on the G20 Global Land Initiative YouTube channel : <https://www.youtube.com/live/18SB1rWV5VM>



Some residents of Mosul are now better prepared for climate change

Mosul, 21 November 2024 - Residents of Bab Sinjar Housing Complex and Al-Azizya neighbourhood in Mosul are now better prepared for climate change adaptation and sustainable living.

Through a public outreach campaign, UN-Habitat and Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) engaged over 1,000 returnees, including more than 400 women, offering guidance on responding to climate-related disasters like sandstorms, droughts, and floods.

The campaign also encouraged green practices, including home gardening, composting, and adopting the 3Rs—Reuse, Reduce, Recycle.

The initiative, funded by the Government of Japan, is part of the

“Japan Village Project,” focused on developing a strategic residential area in Mosul for returnees under the city's

Master Plan, while promoting a better and more sustainable urban future for all of Iraq.



UNDP and the Ministry of Interior are joining forces to fight environmental crime in Iraq

Baghdad, 25 November 2024 - 21 police officers from the Environmental Police Directorate have completed a specialized training on investigating environmental offenses. This training equips officers with cutting-edge tools to protect Iraq's natural resources.



Advancing environmental and climate Justice in Iraq

Erbil, 16 December 2024 - UNDP is supporting the Government of Iraq in drafting the law for Protection and Improvement of Environment. As part of this ongoing effort, UNDP recently convened a roundtable in Erbil, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, members of the Parliament Health and Environment committee, representatives from the State Council, Supreme Judicial Council and Environmental Police. Stakeholders gathered to discuss the draft law articles and identifying strengths, weaknesses, and proposing modifications to ensure the law aligns with the international best practices.

UNESCO celebrates the completion of the shaft of the Al-Hadba Minaret

Mosul, 15 November 2024 - Today, UNESCO celebrates a landmark achievement! The completion of the shaft of the Al-Hadba Minaret marks a new milestone in the revival of the city, with a for the people of Mosul. UNESCO is grateful for the incredible teamwork that made this vision a reality. Together, we've created a powerful symbol of resilience, a true testament to international cooperation. Thank you to everyone involved in this journey!

UNESCO Director-General, Ms. Audrey Azoulay: "We did it! Thanks to all stakeholders of this UNESCO initiative: donors, national and local authorities, experts, professionals who worked on the ground, many of whom are Moslawis. Can't wait to return to Mosul to celebrate the full completion

of our work!"

UAE Minister of Culture, Salem Khalid Al Qassimi: "A proud moment as we celebrate the completion of the Al Hadba Minaret of the Al Nouri mosque. The UAE's contribution to the flagship initiative 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' in

partnership with UNESCO and the Government of Iraq to reconstruct iconic landmarks have fostered broader cultural and social revival of the city. A testament to the power of culture in unifying communities, and the impact of our cultural cooperation."



UNESCO Iraq Office participates in a workshop on the re-evaluation of the boundaries of the Samarra Archaeological City World Heritage Site



Baghdad, 15 November 2024 - UNESCO Iraq Office actively participated in a three-day workshop on the "Re-evaluation of the Boundaries of the Samarra Archaeological City World Heritage Site," held from

November 5 to 7. The workshop, organized by Salah al-Din Governorate and the "Preparatory Committee for the Proclamation of Samarra as the Capital of Iraq Islamic Civilization" in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, focused on enhancing the conservation of this significant site. During the workshop, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Head of the Culture Programme at UNESCO Iraq Office, and Ms. Tatyana Trudolyubova, Project Associate, provided technical guidance on procedures aligned with the 1972 World Heritage Convention. They advised on boundary modifications, management planning, conservation strategies, and heritage impact assessments for new infrastructure projects. An agreement was signed between the Governorate of Salah al-

Din, Samarra Municipality, and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities to improve management and conservation at the Samarra site, with continued technical assistance from UNESCO. Reaffirming UNESCO's commitment, Mr. Sorosh-Wali announced a comprehensive capacity-building program on damage assessment, maintenance, and earthen architecture conservation for Iraqi technicians, scheduled for early 2025. Located in central Iraq, the Samarra Archaeological City holds immense historical significance as the former capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007. For more information on this site and its conservation, visit: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/276>

Exploring Mosul's heritage together

Mosul, 02 December 2024 - UNESCO, in partnership with Qaf Lab and the Mosul Heritage Foundation, recently held a thought-provoking discussion session on the upcoming Suleiman Al-Sayegh Palatial House exhibition, developed in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and with the support of the United Arab Emirates.

The Suleiman Al-Sayegh Palatial House, rehabilitated with the generous

support of the European Union, will soon host this unique exhibition. This session provided an opportunity to present ideas and gather diverse perspectives from the community on shaping an exhibition that narrates Mosul's rich history. The event brought together prominent figures, experts, and engaged citizens, showcasing the community's unwavering commitment to preserving and celebrating its heritage.



Heritage beats: reviving Afro-Iraqi culture



Basra, 18 December 2024 – The rhythmic beats of traditional drums echo through the warm November air as the band Al-Masa start their performance, kicking off a two-day Afro-Iraqi cultural festival in Basra, southern Iraq. The performance introduces its guests to the rich, soulful melodies of Afro-Iraqi folklore music — a tradition passed down through the generations and deeply rooted in the history of migration in the region.

Mishal Al-Ziyadi, 27-year-old founder and lead of the band, stands proudly at the center of the stage, as the audience moves to the beats of the music – music that he has rehearsed countless times and knows by heart.

Born and raised in the district of Al-Zubair, in the governorate of Basra, Mishal is a proud Afro-Iraqi. Though his childhood was marked by war, conflict, and often discrimination, he holds dear memories of his childhood: mud-brick houses of his close-knit neighborhood, traditional games in the courtyard, the joyful rhythm of Afro-Iraqi music, and the first time he held the traditional drum – tar.

Basra, where Mishal's roots run deep, is home to descendants of immigrants and enslaved persons who arrived in the region from Eastern and Southern Africa, as early as the ninth century.

“We learn our music by watching and listening to others. My father and my

cousins used to play at weddings and gatherings. I started picking it up bit by bit just by observing,” Mishal explains his early passion for traditional drumming. Mishal also feels responsible to pass down his culture and traditions: “We involve the kids in family gatherings, and they love it. It's in their blood,” he says with pride. He dreams of one day teaching his own children the music, culture and values of his heritage, ensuring that it lives on.

To realize this dream, Mishal founded Al-Masa, his own Afro-Iraqi folklore band, with five of his closest friends. “Creating a band isn't just about forming a group,” he adds. “It requires genuine effort to uphold traditions and keep our legacy alive. I want everyone to see and value our culture for what it truly is”.

The journey wasn't easy. Band members needed to learn the music from scratch, without any financial support, and had to source rare and expensive instruments from the Gulf. Despite the challenges, Mishal has always had support from his father – even today, Mishal asks him for feedback to improve his performance.

“I hold traditional art very dear to my heart,” shares Mishal. “I take great pride in it. Every event I manage must have traditional music. It's part of who I am, part of Mishal Al-Ziyadi”.

The recent Al Sika cultural festival in Basra, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United States Embassy in Iraq, was especially meaningful for Mishal as it brought together more than 200 community members for the celebration of Afro-Iraqi art, culture and heritage. It's rare that such events take place, and for Mishal, it was a chance to spotlight the Afro-Iraqi community's contributions to Iraq's cultural mosaic.

Dreaming about the future, Mishal envisions sharing the Afro-Iraqi folklore beyond Iraq, introducing it to audiences in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, where he sees cultural commonalities with other communities of African descendants. He also hopes for greater government and institutional support to preserve and promote his community's heritage.

“More people need to learn about Afro-Iraqi culture – through festivals, weddings, and Ramadan gatherings,” he concludes. With each beat of the drum, Mishal continues to bridge the past and present, being a true ambassador of Afro-Iraqi culture.

IOM, in partnership with Durural civil society organization and with support from United States Embassy in Iraq, is implementing the Al Sika project to revitalize Afro-Iraqi cultural heritage and promote inter-community dialogue in Basra. It aims to address several challenges faced by the Afro-Iraqi community, such as social marginalization, low educational attainment, unemployment, and poverty by shedding light on their culture, raising community awareness, and supporting their social and cultural identity. The project seeks to enhance understanding of Afro-Iraqi cultural identity while promoting social inclusion and resilience within the community.

By Olga Borzenkova and Ahmed Kaka, IOM

New tool for heritage recovery!

Mosul, 22 December 2024 - UNESCO and ICCROM, in coordination with the University of Mosul and with the generous support of the UAE, have launched the Training Guide for Post-Conflict Heritage Recovery—a groundbreaking resource designed to help rebuild cultural heritage in conflict zones.

Developed through extensive fieldwork in Mosul, this guide equips heritage

professionals, policymakers, and students with practical tools for recovery planning, community engagement, and sustainable rebuilding.

Get your free copy at: <https://unes.co/as4rrh>

Let's empower communities to preserve their history and build a brighter future!



DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai and EU Ambassador Seiler visit UNESCO Iraq's EU-funded project at the Erbil Agricultural Vocational School

Erbil, 30 October 2024 – Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, and European Union Ambassador in Iraq, Thomas Seiler, visited UNESCO's EU-funded project at the Erbil Agricultural Vocational School. This initiative equips Iraq's youth with essential agricultural skills, linking education with job opportunities for a sustainable future.



UNESCO launches four Vocational Training workshops to empower 100 youth in Mosul, supported by the European Union



Mosul, 02 November 2024 - Funded by the European Union, UNESCO Iraq Office has launched four vocational training workshops in the construction sector for 100 young job seekers in Mosul. The project, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the governorates of Mosul and Basra, is part of the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" initiative. The workshops aim to enhance the professional skills of young men and women in construction-

related fields such as bricklaying, electrical installation, plumbing, carpentry, and concrete work, to contribute to the reconstruction of Mosul. The training lasts for three months, and this phase targets a total of 350 participants in Mosul and Basra. Santosh Khatri, Chief of Education at UNESCO Iraq, stated: "These workshops are a critical step towards empowering Iraqi youth and enhancing their capabilities in the construction sector. By

equipping them with the necessary skills, we are contributing to the rebuilding of devastated communities and boosting the local economy by creating new job opportunities."

Mithaq Talib, Director of Labor and Social Affairs Directorate / Head of Labor and Vocational Training Department - Nineveh, added: "This project represents a significant opportunity for young men and women in Mosul to acquire the technical skills required in the labor market, particularly in light of the urgent need for the city's reconstruction. Our collaboration with UNESCO directly contributes to achieving this goal and supporting social stability."

Bilal Al-Hamaydah, TVET Project Consultant, emphasized: "These workshops not only provide skills training but also aim to empower participants to take an active role in rebuilding their city. We are proud to continue building on the successes of the first and second phases, where over 1,568 young men and women were trained, and more than 4,950 job opportunities were created."

A new nine-classroom primary school in Basirma is now up and running

Erbil, 12 November 2024 - Following its official opening over the summer, the Basirma school, which is a collaboration between UNHCR, the KRG Ministry of Education, and the Directorate of Education in Erbil, is bringing quality education to over 400 students from both refugee and local communities in Basirma, Rizgary, and Shorish. Students now have a safe, accessible place to learn without long commutes. This school is also a step in advancing the Refugee Education Integration Policy (#REIP), building schools and classrooms to reduce overcrowding for all children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



Every child deserves the chance to learn, grow, and thrive

Baghdad, 20 November 2024 - This World Children's Day, we celebrate refugee children in Iraq. Thanks to UNHCR's support, more than 49,000 refugee students were enrolled in public schools across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) for the 2023-2024 academic year.

The Refugee Education Integration Policy welcomes Syrian refugee children and teachers into the public education system. In 2024 alone,

UNHCR has:

- ✓ Built six new schools and rehabilitated eight others in the KR-I.
 - ✓ Constructed 34 new classrooms in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.
 - ✓ Supported language courses for over 5,000 refugees to ease their transition into Kurdish-language instruction.
- Education builds brighter futures. Let's ensure every child has access to quality learning opportunities.



Toyota Iraq and UNDP celebrate successful vocational training programme for youth in Baghdad

Baghdad, 16 November 2024 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Toyota Iraq are proud to announce the successful completion of the Automotive Technician Program, a vocational training initiative, generously funded by the Government of Germany through KfW, aimed at empowering youth in Baghdad.

From August to November 2024, 19 young trainees participated in a comprehensive three-month training course. The programme offered a blended approach of classroom instruction and on-the-job training at Toyota dealerships in Baghdad and Alkut in Wassit, building the trainees capacity with essential skills needed in the automotive industry.

The training covered essential skills including basic vehicle maintenance, repair techniques, and the principles of workmanship and safety in automotive service. Graduates of the programme now have recognized qualifications that significantly increase their employability within the automotive sector and beyond.

"We are proud to witness the success of this initiative, which reflects our commitment to supporting Iraq's youth and fostering resilience in communities affected by conflict," said Sascha

Graumann, Deputy Resident Representative, "This partnership with Toyota Iraq is an excellent example of how collaboration between the public and private sectors can create sustainable opportunities for vulnerable populations."

Tadashi Tanimoto, CEO of Toyota Iraq. "At Toyota Iraq, we believe in the transformative power of education and training, particularly for young people who represent the future of Iraq.

This vocational training programme is not just about developing technical skills; it's about empowering young Iraqis to build better futures for themselves and contribute to the growth of Iraq's economy. We are deeply committed to supporting the next generation of automotive

professionals and fostering a skilled workforce that will drive Iraq's development for years to come."

This initiative is part of the Building Resilience Through Employment Promotion (BREP I) project, which as of October 2024 has reached a total of 10,731 trainees across Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salahadine, demonstrating the significant impact of vocational training in promoting recovery and resilience in Iraq.

This collaboration marks an important step towards achieving Iraq's 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals by improving employability, promoting inclusive economic growth, and supporting the active engagement of youth, women, and people with disabilities in the development process.



ILO and partners successfully rehabilitated two girls' schools in Basra!

Basra, 27 November 2024 - In collaboration with the Directorate of Education and DOLSA in Basra, the ILO, and its implementing partner Mayameen Humanitarian Foundation, successfully rehabilitated two girls' schools—Al-Manahil and Nour El-Islam—in Basra! □ The schools are located in a shared building near the Al-Ahrar and Kubieh neighborhoods, the rehabilitation works encompassed 12 classrooms and 6 offices for headmasters, teachers, and counselors. Furthermore, The entire

renovation was carried out by over 60 male and female graduates from our vocational training program, and included the following: walls painting, electrical work, plumbing, interior design and decorative improvements, AC maintenance, welding work, general repairs and maintenance, and replacement of broken doors and glass. This initiative is part of the EU-funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to

the COVID-19 Crisis," implemented by UN-HABITAT Iraq in collaboration with the ILO. It has not only enhanced the learning environment for female students in these neighborhoods but also provided invaluable hands-on experience for graduates from the same area, helping them strengthen their practical skills and better prepare for their careers after they graduate from the vocational training programme.

UNHCR helps rebuild education and hope for children

Anbar, 03 December 2024 - “Our school has become more beautiful and cleaner, and my friends and I have more motivation to study,” says Yousef, 9th grade student at Al-Istiqlal secondary school in Anbar, Haditha.

The school was partially destroyed because of conflict and previously children faced immense challenges, traveling long distances to attend alternative schools.

In 2024, UNHCR has rehabilitated the

school and it now includes a new examination hall ensuring that more than 300 students can take their final exams locally. Together, we’re helping rebuild education and hope for children.

UNDP and partners develop curricula for Entrepreneurship and Employability Skills courses



Erbil, 05 December 2024 - UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE) in the Kurdistan Region and with funding from USAID Iraq, is developing curricula for Entrepreneurship and Employability Skills courses to be implemented across universities in the Kurdistan Region.

Entrepreneurship Course aims to equip students with the requisite skills and mindset for prosperous entrepreneurship, instilling a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking among students, fostering a cultural shift within university environments and to equip students with practical skills essential for

initiating and managing businesses, fostering critical thinking, and adaptability. While the Employability Skills Course prepares students for the workplace by teaching essential skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving, through practical assignments.

On November 19, 2024, the first drafts of these courses were presented to university faculty and key stakeholders to gather feedback and recommendations in order to further enrich the content. The KRG Ministry of Higher Education is planning to integrate these courses into its universities program starting from the second semester of the current 2024-2025 academic year.

This initiative marks a significant step in preparing students to meet the demands of a competitive global workforce while supporting economic growth in the Kurdistan Region.

An initiative aims to restore the heart of knowledge and learning at Mosul University

Mosul, 05 December 2024 – UNESCO is proud to share the successful completion of a weeklong training workshop for 40 librarians (65% female) from Mosul University Libraries.

From November 25 to December 1, 2024, master trainers from Mosul University’s Central Library delivered the workshop, covering key topics such as library management functions, training and facilitation skills, digitalization, library collections management, evaluation of library services, disaster preparedness, and library policies.

This Capacity Building Program was implemented in partnership with Ulster University as part of the “Restoring Mosul University Library” project. The project is generously funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by UNESCO Iraq in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Mosul University.



This initiative aims to restore the heart of knowledge and learning at Mosul University. By empowering the library staff, we are fostering a ripple effect of learning and transformation that will

benefit students, educators, and the wider community in the long run.

For more information on the capacity building program, please read our article: <https://unesco.co/sjutq5>

UNESCO contributes to enhancement of employment for youth in Nineveh with its EYE-N programme

Mosul, 27 November 2024 - Under the "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul" initiative, this training program comes to enhance employment for youth in Nineveh (EYE-N).

Starting on 06 October 2024, 100 young participants began their three-month training journey at the Vocational Training Center in Mosul. They are receiving theoretical and hands-on

training in fields such as Air Conditioning, Upholstery, and TV/Monitor repair, all of which are paving the way for a brighter future.

Project funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and implemented by UNESCO with the Vocational Training Center in Mosul.



UNHCR's DAFI scholarship paves the way for refugees to thrive in Iraq



Baghdad/Erbil, 14 December 2024 - For Aya, Nihad, and Taha, education is more than a personal endeavour – it's a way to give back to their communities. As refugees in Iraq, they have all faced significant challenges to get to where they are today, but with the support of the DAFI Tertiary Scholarship Programme, implemented by UNHCR, they are confident they can progress even further.

Aya vividly recalls the day when she first entered the gates of Hawler Medical University, where she is currently a fourth-year student studying physiotherapy. "It felt surreal," she says describing the surge of emotion she experienced, similar to the day she found out she was first accepted to university.

"All the hard work, all the sacrifices, led to this."

This feeling is not unique. Since 2016, 488 refugee students, including 280 women, have been sponsored by DAFI Scholarship, studying in 21 universities across Iraq. DAFI, which stands for the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative, was established in 1992 through the support of Germany and has since supported over 26,300 young refugees globally to undertake higher education.

One of the main purposes of the DAFI scholarship is to lessen the financial burden refugee families and students often face when trying to enrol in

university. This was particularly important for Taha Al-Khadish, a Palestinian refugee who was born and grew up in Baghdad.

"Ever since middle school, I felt it would be a challenge to attend university. I knew that university is expensive, and constantly questioned how will I bear its costs or how will my parents bear its expenses?"

Today, however, Taha is in his fourth year studying Medical Technologies student at the Middle Technical University in Baghdad. He dreams of earning a master's degree and a doctorate (PhD). "Just as the scholarship helped me and gave me the opportunity to complete my studies, my ambition is to help other refugees with education so that we can build a bright future for the country."

Nihad also has a deep resolve to give back to his community. As a physiotherapy student, he envisions opening a clinic to serve both refugees and host communities.

"Physiotherapy restores health and well-being," he explains. "My goal is to treat anyone, anywhere."

Beyond contributing to their communities, Aya, Nihad, and Taha all agree that the DAFI programme has also renewed their sense of hope and helped them feel integrated into Iraqi society despite their refugee status. As part of the scholarship, UNHCR, in partnership with Sorouh for

Sustainable Development Foundation, organizes additional activities such as counselling sessions, social events, gatherings, and voluntary activities for DAFI students to network, meet and discuss common challenges they are facing as well as bridge the gap between education and employment.

DAFI scholars also receive financial support to help them meet their additional educational needs such as buying books or covering transportation costs to university, easing the financial strain on families who otherwise could not afford these costs.

Ultimately the scholarship programme aims to empower refugee youth to contribute meaningfully to their communities while building a brighter future for themselves and others.

"Every refugee has both rights and responsibilities. For me, continuing my studies is part of contributing to this community while preparing to help my own people one day," Nihad concludes.

Through the dedicated support of the Government of Germany, along with the support of the government of Denmark, as well as other private partners and foundations, the DAFI scholarship continues to support refugee students in Iraq and around the world.

Lilly Carlisle contributed reporting to this story.

By Rasheed Hussein Rasheed in Erbil and Karlo Jeelo in Baghdad, UNHCR



UNESCO organizes “Education Sector Coordination Group” meeting to enhance collaboration and support Iraq’s National Education

Baghdad, 15 December 2024 – Today, UNESCO, as the secretariat of the Education Sector Coordination Group, convened a high-level meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Prime Minister’s Advisory Commission (PMAC), UNICEF, the European Union, the World Bank, the British Council, GIZ, the Embassy of Japan, and Save the Children International (SCI).

The meeting highlighted achievements by organizations and donors contributing to Iraq’s education sector and focused on defining roles and responsibilities for co-chairing the four



sub-groups: Inclusive and General Education, Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Additionally, Save the Children

International (SCI), within the ITALEEM programme, presented the establishment of the “Iraq Civil Society Education Forum” (ICSEF), a platform aimed at strengthening civil society engagement in education.

Youth

UNODC and UN-Habitat foster rehabilitation and reintegration of children and young people deprived of their liberty in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 November 2024 – The refurbishment of the Young Boys Rehabilitation School (Al-Rashad) in Baghdad was concluded at a handover ceremony attended by representatives of the Iraqi Government, international community and civil society.

The refurbishment of the reformatory was carried out as part of the project titled “STRIVE Juvenile: Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Children by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups” which is funded by the European Union and led by UNODC in partnership with the Government of Iraq. This initiative highlights the parties’ joint commitment to promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and young people deprived of their liberty by improving treatment and environments.

“Every success we achieve in rehabilitating and reintegrating a juvenile is a success for the protection of our society and ensuring of a better future for our children”, said Mr. Mohamed Radi Bahr, Director General of the Juvenile Care Directorate under the Ministry of Justice. “We strongly believe that the solution is in rehabilitation and reform, and not punishment and marginalization”.

The enhancements at Al-Rashad Reformatory provide healthier and safer living conditions for around 270 children and young people detained,

including for terrorism-related offences. They include the creation of four outdoor recreational spaces; the construction of a football pitch equipped with solar lighting; the renovation of eight restrooms; the establishment of a dental clinic and a quarantine room to safely isolate cases of transmissible disease; and the provision of essential equipment for improving access to education, vocational training, sport and leisure.

“The enhancements that we will see today are testament to the collective efforts of international partners and foremost national Iraqi stakeholders under the STRIVE Juvenile project. We believe that every child deserves a chance to rebuild their life, and today’s event marks an important step toward

realizing that vision. Providing this chance is a shared priority for all of us involved”, said Mr. Frerik Kampman, representing the EU Delegation in Iraq.

A further 300 children and young people have benefited from renovations made through the STRIVE Juvenile project at Ninawa Juvenile Reformatory in Mosul, Iraq. Classrooms have been added to create an environment that is conducive to learning. A new gym and multipurpose hall have paved the way for physical and recreational activities. Capacity for family visits has been increased by 60 per cent, enabling contact with the outside world. Spaces where social workers can meet with those deprived of their liberty provide opportunities for



UNODC and UN-Habitat foster rehabilitation and reintegration of children and young people ... (continued)

essential mental health and psychosocial support. Renovated washrooms are supportive of good hygiene, while solar panels and new water tanks ensure that constant electricity and water is sustainably and securely provided.

These renovations have been made possible through collaborative efforts of UNODC and UN-Habitat. This initiative exemplifies the way in which upgrades to buildings and equipment, combined with a child-sensitive approach, can support effective rehabilitation and reintegration.

"Today's enhancements go beyond physical renovations; they represent UNODC's commitment to investing in the potential of every child and young person. By creating spaces that nurture growth, learning, and connection, we are supporting these individuals on a path to reintegration, giving them a chance at rebuilding their lives and contributing positively to their societies" said Mr. Ali El-Bereir, Head



of UNODC in Iraq.

"Improving living conditions gives children and young people an enhanced environment that encourages better choices and a brighter future. UN-Habitat is proud to support the STRIVE project and Iraqi authorities in creating a safer future for Iraq's youth," said Mr. Ryosuke Teraoka, Head of UN-Habitat Kurdistan Region of Iraq Office.

Through the EU-funded project,

STRIVE Juvenile, Iraq and UNODC are implementing important initiatives that prevent and respond to violence against children and young people in the context of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The partnership is dedicated to promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and young people who are deprived of their liberty in Baghdad and Mosul, thereby contributing to broader peace and reconciliation processes in Iraq.

UNICEF on X

Baghdad, 20 November 2024 - Happy #WorldChildrensDay! Today is a global day of action for children's rights.

Children are the future of Iraq, and we need to make sure they are heard, included, and taken seriously.

Let's listen to the future and create a better world together.

UNICEF Iraq Representative, Sandra Lattouf: "On #WorldChildrensDay, join me in celebrating child's voice and dreams in Iraq. Let us strengthen our resolve to advocate for children's rights and ensure that the commitments made on the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the decision makers are reinforced." For every child, a future.



How to advance Iraq's youth agenda

Baghdad, 27 November 2024 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaccai, met with Mr. Ali Helal Khalaf, Executive Director of the Higher Council of Youth, alongside UNFPA and UNICEF Iraq representatives. They discussed enhancing coordination to advance Iraq's youth agenda.





Basra, 30 November 2024 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, led today the UN Country Team's visit to Thi Qar's Marshlands. These vital wetlands are key to biodiversity, cultural heritage, and climate action. Together, we must protect and preserve this unique ecosystem!



Baghdad, 05 December 2024 - At today's International Volunteer Day in Baghdad, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Isaczai**, joined H.E. Prime Minister **Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani** to honor Iraq's volunteers, stating: "Volunteering is the cornerstone of building strong, stable communities, aiding recovery from crises, and fostering social cohesion." #IVD2024

Statement from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on Victory Day in Iraq

Baghdad, 09 December 2024 - On the 10th of December, Iraq celebrates Victory Day, marking the liberation of its territory from the control of the terrorist group Dae'sh/ISIL. On this important milestone, we recall the great sacrifices of Iraqis to reclaim their land and establish security and stability throughout the country. In addition to being an occasion on which we express our heartfelt congratulations, Victory Day underscores the need to preserve the gains that have been achieved through the efforts of everybody in Iraq as well as their partners from around the world. It is a call for all to consolidate national unity and to jointly work towards a strong Iraq that can confront challenges, and one that is free of the tensions and conflicts afflicting the

region.

On this occasion, we laud the achievements made since the territorial victory over terrorism. We call for continued efforts to rid Iraq not only of the remnants of Dae'sh, but of all forms of extremism and fanaticism. We look forward to an Iraq in which everyone enjoys security, safety, respect for human rights and the rule of law. We look forward to the country turning the pages of the painful past for good by strengthening national reconciliation to maintain the gains achieved, and to focus on what unites and avoid what divides, including controversial topics that do not contribute to unifying the social fabric and cohesion among its components.

We are hopeful that the joy of victory will be completed with the safe and

dignified return of all those displaced by this conflict to their homes, and when all Iraqi citizens are repatriated from Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria and integrated into society. In this context, we commend the great efforts by the Iraqi government on those particular files, supported by UNAMI and the UN Iraq Country Team. The United Nations reiterates its full support for the Government and people of Iraq in the restoration of sovereignty and control over their territory, and in achieving sustainable stability and development. Iraq has proven to the world that it is capable, through the solidarity of its people, of overcoming challenges and creating a brighter and more prosperous future for all its citizens.

SRSG Al Hassan visits Iraq International Book Fair

Baghdad, 14 December 2024 - Accompanied by the Minister of Culture and the Deputy Mayor of Baghdad, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, along with senior UN staff in Iraq, visited the Iraq International Book Fair. The SRSG expressed his admiration for the excellent organization, the diversity of publications, and the range of participating publishers. He also affirmed the United Nations' support for Iraq's journey toward a brighter future. This event reflects the resilience of Iraq and its role in promoting education, culture, the dissemination of knowledge, and fostering confidence in the path toward progress and prosperity.





Baghdad, 14 December 2024 - Accompanied by the Deputy Mayor of Baghdad, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited Al-Mutanabbi Street, with its historic buildings centuries old. He engaged with Iraqis showcasing the richness of Iraqi culture through art, music, and more, in beautiful displays that reflect the deep cultural heritage of Iraq and its vibrant spirit.



Baghdad, 14 December 2024 - Accompanied by the Minister of Culture and the Deputy Mayor of Baghdad, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited the Iraqi National Museum, where he expressed his deep admiration for the country's rich history. The SRSG praised the Ministry of Culture's efforts in showcasing Iraq's heritage to the world, ensuring it remains a living testament to Iraq's cultural significance.

SRSG Al Hassan hosts celebration of World Arabic Language Day

Baghdad, 18 December 2024 – In the presence of the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid, ministers, diplomats and United Nations staff, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, hosted at the UN premises in Baghdad, a celebration of World Arabic Language Day.

Arabic is a cornerstone of humanity's cultural diversity. It is one of the most widely spoken and widely used languages in the world, spoken daily by more than 400 million people worldwide.

"It's a special pleasure to celebrate the Arabic Language Day here in Baghdad," said SRSG Al Hassan. "The language in which many poets have written some of the most beautiful verses in global literature, showcasing

Iraq's heritage to the world, ensuring it remains a living testament to Iraq's cultural significance - the cradle of civilization."

The Arabic language provides access to a world rich in diversity in all its forms and manifestations, including the diversity of origins, tastes and beliefs.



United Nations in Iraq celebrates World Arabic Language Day



Baghdad, 18 December 2024 - On a crisp Wednesday mid-morning, United Nations staff in Baghdad joined today in a warm celebration to mark World Arabic Language Day - held annually on 18 December. Arabic, spoken by several hundred million people and one of six official United Nations languages since 1973, represents a pillar of cultural diversity in all its forms - from classical or dialectal, from poetry or prose, from song or act.

Echoing these sentiments in his welcoming remarks, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, spoke in Arabic stressing how "The Arabic language is not only a language, but also a strong pillar of human civilization, connecting peoples through literature, poetry and music. Throughout the ages, the Arabic language has remained the language of science, intellect, innovations and discoveries in many fields. Classical Greek and Roman works of science, medicine and philosophy came to Europe through Arabic translations. Of course, Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran."

As rich as the Arabic language is, such was the atmosphere at today's well organized and impressive event in the United Nations compound. With the aroma of freshly brewed Arabic coffee

filtering through the cool air, and the taste of sweet and savoury delicacies, the crowd immersed themselves in intricate calligraphy script by Iraqi calligrapher Taha Bakr and enjoyed a traditional live music performance by a vibrant local group - the Sanjat Band, while avid bookworms browsed through the pages of Arabic publications on sale at the makeshift book stall. And, with the festive season upon us, several walked away with trinkets of Iraqi souvenirs which were also on sale at the craft stall.

Here is the text of the remarks made by Remarks by Mr. Claudio Cordone, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq For Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance on this event:

"Hello and welcome to UNAMI's celebration of the World Arabic Language Day.

Every year, the United Nations celebrates this day on the eighteenth of December, the date on which the United Nations General Assembly resolution was issued in 1973 to include Arabic among the six official languages in which the United Nations operates.

As the UN Secretary-General previously stated in his message on the occasion of Arabic Language Day, "In the United Nations, the Arabic language contributes daily to

harmonious communication among peoples and nations, moving towards a multilingual and inclusive organization."

Arabic is one of the oldest languages in history. It is one of the most widely spoken languages. Hundreds of millions of the world's population speak the language, in many different dialects, from Mauritania to the Arabian Peninsula, from Lebanon on the Mediterranean Sea to Somalia on the Indian Ocean.

The Arabic language is not only a language, but also a strong pillar of human civilization, connecting peoples through literature, poetry and music. Throughout the ages, the Arabic language has remained the language of science, intellect, innovations and discoveries in many fields. Classical Greek and Roman works of science, medicine and philosophy came to Europe through Arabic translations. Of course, Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran.

Among the arts that characterize the Arabic language is Arabic calligraphy, which flourished centuries ago here in Iraq and other countries. It was included by UNESCO in its Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2021. Today, we have one of these artists to show us this fine art.

Unfortunately, the modern world is witnessing a decline in the use of the Arabic language. Therefore, it is extremely important to urge young people and future generations to continue to learn and use the Arabic language to preserve this rich cultural and historical heritage.

Allow me to thank my colleagues in the translation team in UNAMI for their continued efforts and contributions to the work of the mission in Iraq.

In conclusion, I hope that you all enjoy this celebration that expresses our pride in the Arabic language and culture and our gratitude for Iraq. Thank you.



UNESCO celebrates World Arabic Language Day from Al-Jawahiri House in Baghdad



Baghdad, 18 December 2024 - UNESCO celebrated World Arabic Language Day today at Al-Jawahiri House in Baghdad, in the presence of specialists, writers, and journalists. The Communication and Information Program Officer at UNESCO Iraq, Diaa Thabet, stated: "Following the launch of the Baghdad Registration Initiative for Digital and Information Literacy Cities, we have implemented several sessions with the Baghdad Municipality, culminating in

today's session on the International Day of the Arabic Language. Through this day, we aim to highlight the challenges facing Arabic, a language spoken in over 29 countries by 450 million people, while its presence on the Internet is less than 3%. This disparity poses a significant challenge. We encourage Arabic language users on social media to expand Arabic content online, especially with artificial intelligence now playing a major role in the digital world."

UNESCO selected the theme for this year's celebration as "The Arabic Language in the Age of Artificial Intelligence", emphasizing that it is now possible to process over 27 international languages, including Arabic programmatically. This event is part of a joint donor project with UNESCO, aiming to improve the presence of the Arabic language in the digital realm.

The Director of Cultural Forums at the Baghdad Municipality, Kholoud Musa, added:

"The Baghdad Municipality celebrates World Arabic Language Day, an initiative introduced by UNESCO years ago. These celebrations take place at the Secretariat's office and through cultural forums, including Al-Jawahiri house." She noted that "the workshop included media professionals and activists from various sectors and institutions. This initiative will become an annual event in partnership with UNESCO, utilizing cultural forums to host diverse cultural activities and workshops."

Message from the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, on the occasion of Christmas and New Year

Baghdad, 24 December 2024 – "Hello. I would like to take this opportunity to extend warm greetings to all Iraqi people, in particular, the Christian community, on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year. This time of year, brings a special sense of hope, peace, and joy. For those who celebrate Christmas, it is a time to

reflect on the values of compassion, generosity, and solidarity that unite us as human beings. It's a time to reconnect with the family, community, and shared values. It is also a time for all of us to show unity, solidarity, and care to all. Let's hold on to the spirit of Christmas—our shared humanity and commitment to making the world a

better place. May the New Year bring you peace, happiness, and renewed hope. Together, we will continue to make strides toward a better future to everyone in Iraq.

Merry Christmas and happy New Year."



Baghdad, 29 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited today the Iraqi House of Fashion. "A historic landmark reflecting thousands of years of civilization, a global heritage worthy of preservation. It is Iraq's humanitarian message to the world," wrote SRSG Al Hassan in the guests' book.



Baghdad, 29 December 2024 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, visited today Imam Musa Al-Kadhim Holy Shrine where he enjoyed its timeless artistic and spiritual beauty.