

UNAMI Herald

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Social, religious and national diversity in Iraq and its importance in building citizenship and peaceful co-existence



Baghdad, 31 December 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert attended today a conference organized by the Office of the National Security Adviser and Al-Nahrain Centre for Strategic Studies entitled "Social, Religious and National Diversity in Iraq and its Importance in Building Citizenship and Peaceful Co-existence". In the presence of the National Security Adviser, Mr. Qassim Al-Araji, Minister for Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Fa'iq, Chairman of the Al-Hikma Movement, Sayyed Ammar Al-Hakeem, representatives of various ethnic, religious, civil society and non-governmental organizations, SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert stressed that "states have a responsibility to protect and promote the identities of minorities, and may not discriminate against them".

Here is the text of SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert's remarks at this event:
"Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be addressing this timely workshop on a topic that could have easily been ignored, given the numerous competing challenges facing Iraq. It is most encouraging that critical issues of citizenship, diversity, inclusion, and coexistence, have been placed front and centre

today.

My years in Iraq have reinforced the conviction that tolerance and inclusiveness are not only moral and political imperatives: they are a precious source of national vitality, of cultural and indeed economic wealth. A society in which diverse groups peacefully coexist is not only a secure society, but also a dynamic, prosperous and self-confident one.

It is at once a cliché and a fundamental truth that Iraq is, and has always been, a rich mosaic of cultures. Some of the greatest inventions in human history were created or perfected here: the wheel, the written word, algebra, and countless more.

Crucially, these were not the innovations of one community, speaking one language, sharing one culture. Instead, they are the products of diversity, of ideas and viewpoints being exchanged. The communities who gave humanity these legacies embraced and leveraged their differences.

And Iraqis should take just as much pride in their current diversity. Not only does it offer immense cultural beauty, it can also provide a competitive edge in the global knowledge economy.

A strong House of Wisdom, however, requires solid foundations. Sadly, these have recently been shaken to their core. Mismanagement,

geopolitical tensions, callous communitarianism, incitement and hate speech, the horror of Da'esh, have all conspired to render many people in Iraq extremely vulnerable. Displacement, rights deprivations and poor access to essential services disproportionately affect Iraq's minorities, along with women, the young, the elderly, and those suffering from disabilities. This has only worsened with the economic downturn.

In my most recent briefing to the UN Security Council, I emphasized that combatting divisive muhassassa, fighting corruption, building domestic resilience and more inclusive forms of development, are not just economic necessities: they offer political alternative to constant crisis management. Moreover, cohesion undermines those pursuing private gains instead of the national good. And unity strengthens sovereignty: the more Iraqis speak and act as one, the less vulnerable they are to external meddling.

Conversely, a community that is united will be best positioned to defend its interests at the national level: therefore, intra-community reconciliation is just as important as the work at the inter-community level.

We all agree that that defending diversity is imperative, but the question is: how? Well, the key is: respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law, applied to all without exception.

Like a physical crossroads, a crossroads of civilizations offers multiple options, and allows us to go
(Continued on page 3)



In this edition ...

SRSG Hennis Plasschaert: “We look forward to continuing UN-Iraq partnership as we work together for a safer, more prosperous and just society.”

Baghdad, 24 December 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert issued the following end of year message:

“We have all been affected, in one way or another, by the global pandemic. Iraq, like the rest of the world, has suffered immensely. Sadly, COVID-19 has compounded Iraq’s already daunting security, political, social and economic challenges.

With the arrival of a new year, and the promise of a vaccine, I very much hope that this immediate health crisis will soon become part of the past, thereby giving space and time to tackle problems and seize opportunities that lie ahead of us. The new year will not be an easy ride, as Iraq will undoubtedly continue to face multiple storms at once, from economic and security challenges to the pressing need for reform. Elections are set for June 2021, giving the Iraqi people the opportunity to have their voices heard as they chart their political future. The credibility of these elections, and the commitment of all stakeholders to them, will prove essential.

This past October, the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary in the service of humanity. Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations: we look forward to continuing our partnership as we work together for a safer, more prosperous and just society.

I wish you and your loved ones happy holidays.”



National youth conference calls for more youth participation in charting country’s future

Baghdad, 22 November 2020 – Iraqi youth should take an enhanced role in charting their country’s future political course and economic and social development, according to recommendations made at a national conference that was held today in Baghdad. The event was the culmination of 18 workshops, one in each governorate, that brought together hundreds of young people over the last eighteen months to discuss their contribution to shaping Iraq’s future... *More on page 7.*

Launch of the research study on “Needs and challenges: Iraqi women running for elected office”

Baghdad/Beirut, 31 October 2020 – Women’s participation in political processes in Iraq is hampered by many obstacles, despite Iraqi women’s determination to engage in the public sphere. In 2020, Iraq ranked 70th worldwide in terms of women holding seats in parliament.

These findings are highlighted in a new report issued today by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Iraq Foundation... *More on page 17.*

The United Nations supports IDP returns that are safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable

Baghdad, 30 October 2020 – The Office the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq today issued the following statement: “The Government of Iraq has announced its intention to close multiple camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq by the end of 2020. ... *More on page 47.*

Discussion forums held in Baghdad and Erbil on the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325

Baghdad/Erbil, 10 November 2020 - UN Women organized a roundtable session in Baghdad on 2 November 2020 on the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325... *More on page 20.*

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

Social, religious and national diversity in Iraq and its importance in building citizenship and peaceful co-existence *(continued from front cover)*



in different directions. But properly navigating a crossroads, requires rules, and for these rules to be respected. Anyone who has driven in Baghdad will agree that very few adhere to any rules in sharing the road.

Building on that metaphor: respecting multiple identities, which can combine and complement each other rather than suppress, exclude or supersede each other, requires the recognition of every citizen's equality before the law.

Political and community leaders must step up, join hands and serve the interests of the Iraqi people, never engaging in or condoning inflammatory actions and statements that stigmatize, blame or dehumanize.

Just as Iraq must be treated as equal and sovereign within the international community, so must all Iraqis be treated as equal citizens at home. The UN is based on the sovereign equality of all members, and Iraq's sovereignty is strongest when the equality of all its components is assured.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities are essential reading. But today we will focus on a central principle: States have a responsibility to protect and promote the identities of minorities, and may not discriminate against them.

Of course, individual and collective identities intersect in complex ways. But there can be no superior or separate rights for any group that would place its members outside the rule of law. Social, cultural or religious identity should never be invoked to justify any form of oppression or rights violation.

Today's workshop asks us to examine the role of diversity in building

citizenship: in fact, we can emphasize the importance of citizenship rights in preserving diversity.

Now, as you know, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law is central to the UN mandate in Iraq:

- We monitor and report on human rights - including those of minorities.

- We help strengthen government institutions to ensure these rights are realized for all – we have a strong partnership with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, and hope that the draft law on Anti-Discrimination and Protection of Diversity will soon be finalized.

- We advocate extensively for the protection of minorities, including their languages and rights: two recent workshops in Baghdad and Erbil focused on these very issues.

- We facilitate and participate in community reconciliation initiatives throughout Iraq.

- We seek to tackle root causes of inequality and issues such as hate speech, against which UNAMI adopted a Plan of Action and we will continue advocating for rights-based measures, including with regards to the draft law on combating cyber-crime.

- We support the safe return of

displaced persons to their communities of origin, especially when they are in a minority situation.

- We emphasize the need for justice and accountability for crimes affecting Iraq's communities as well as greater public awareness of Iraq's troubled history vis-à-vis minorities.

In recent conversations with minority representatives as well as young demonstrators...I felt (once again) their great disappointment and despair. I explained that change requires time, and hard work by many. I also explained that a collective understanding on the way forward cannot be imposed by the UN: Iraqi ownership is essential.

I am the first to admit that Iraq's challenges did not arise overnight, and are larger than any single government. But the essential spirit of unity is too often being undermined by narrow divisive interests.

Iraqis have overcome immense challenges in the past, and should not despair today. This October, the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary in the service of humanity. Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations - and we will continue our partnership, working together for a safer, more prosperous and just Iraqi society.

In the short term, Iraq will continue to face multiple storms at once, from economic and security challenges to the pressing need for reform.

The June 2021 elections can give all Iraqis the opportunity to have their voices heard in shaping their future. The credibility of these elections will prove essential, and political leaders must ensure that debates are about ideas and policies rather than bankrupt identity politics.

I sincerely hope that 2021 will be the year in which every Iraqi can proudly say "I too am Iraq".

Thank you."



Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 24th November 2020 videoteleconference



New York/Baghdad, 24 November 2020 – On its videoteleconference convened on 24th November 2020, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert at this meeting:

Madam President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

In my last briefing to you, I stated that the Government of Iraq is operating in the eye of multiple storms at once. From the onset, I would like to emphasize that this very much remains the case.

Several distinct, yet interlinked and mutually reinforcing, crises - on the political, security, economic, financial, social, and of course sanitary, fronts – these crises continue to force the hand of the government, pressing it into a reactive, crisis-management mode.

And while all of us hope for the beginning of a global recovery from the covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that its devastating effects can - unfortunately - be expected to last.

Madam President,
The financial and economic situation in Iraq remains troubling, to say the least. The economy is projected to contract by nearly 10% this year.

Now, the impact of the pandemic has wreaked further havoc on already extremely weak private sector activity. And oil prices continue their extended slump, exerting downward pressure on GDP and domestic revenue.

In mid-October a long-awaited economic white paper was released. This important document provides a very useful overview of the structural imbalances which characterize the

Iraqi economy. It also describes a variety of much needed reform measures. And it acknowledges numerous opportunities which have been squandered since 2003.

But while very few would dispute the urgency of steering Iraq towards economic recovery and resilience, we are left wanting on how and when this may be achieved. Or to put it a bit more bluntly: we are left wanting on the political 'game plan'.

One thing is clear: without broad political consensus to transform the white paper into reality, it risks remaining just 'words' on a page.

But let me emphasize: serious, resolute measures to address the ongoing financial and economic crisis cannot wait, not for a day. Government, parliament, political parties and others will have to step up to the plate collectively.

With elections looming, I can only hope that urgently needed reforms, including some very painful ones, will not be swept under the carpet. This would only worsen Iraq's situation, and thus fuel social unrest - sooner or later. In other words: I very much hope that political leaders will resist the temptation to use the electoral calendar as a reason not to deliver.

Now, in the meantime, the Iraqi government has seen it necessary to resort to borrowing in order to meet its obligations for the remainder of 2020, including for the payment of public sector salaries.

The original borrowing law, as proposed by the Minister of Finance, had a very clear objective: to create fiscal space to implement reforms. The reforms needed to diversify Iraq's economy and reduce its dependence on oil, the reforms needed to boost economic opportunities while

advancing sustainable development, the reforms needed to meet the aspirations of the many Iraqis that took to the streets.

However, the law, as actually amended and adopted by Parliament, significantly limits the government's room for manoeuvre. One therefore must ask whether the ends justify the means.

Also, we must constantly be reminded of the fundamental importance of fighting corruption, while preserving fundamental rights in the process. In other words: any effort to reform Iraq's economy must be accompanied by improved governance and transparency.

Additionally, the prevalence of muhassassa, patronage and clientelism continues to hinder progress in Iraq. This, too, must urgently be tackled - otherwise public resources, indeed the hopes and aspirations of the people of Iraq, will continue to be looted.

Moreover, this fight against the scourge of corruption, the quest for more sustainable, inclusive forms of economic development and growth, for dignified employment: these are not just economic necessities.

I said it before: these are ultimately the best devices in any 'peace and security' toolkit - as they provide lasting solutions to unrest and conflict, building domestic resilience to replace constant crisis management.

And at the end of the day: domestic resilience is the best defence against any form of external interference.

Madam President, Iraqis recently marked the one-year anniversary of the protests that began in October 2019. A powerful expression of solidarity and patriotism by Iraqis who demand justice and wish to build a more stable, prosperous homeland. A moment to remember the brave souls lost.

I truly hope that their shared determination to achieve a better future continues to inspire and guide Iraq's leaders.

And I wish to emphasize, as I have many times: the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly must be defended at every turn, throughout Iraq. Now, the drastically reduced levels of violence are encouraging indeed. But Iraq's reality remains harsh – with enforced disappearances and assassinations still part of this reality.

Within this context, I would like to underline once again the pressing need

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 24th November 2020 videoteleconference *(continued)*

for justice and accountability. A fact-finding committee has now been activated. However, it has not yet resulted in a swift end to perceived impunity.

With regards to the June 2021 elections, I would like to recall the wise words of Grand Ayatollah Sistani.

In my meeting with him, mid-September, His Eminence made it clear that the early elections, if properly conducted, could provide a peaceful path out of the ongoing suffering of the country.

His Eminence emphasized the importance of voting freely, without any pressure, and underlined the need for integrity, transparency and observation.

Now, Madam President, I am pleased to report that Parliament has recently finalized necessary electoral legislation. And - in line with UNAMI's mandate - we are now ramping up our technical assistance.

Iraq's electoral institutional capacity can and must be strengthened. So, we ask and expect relevant authorities to step up - and to think in terms of solutions instead of obstacles.

Late last week, the Iraqi government sent a letter to this Council with a request "to obtain more support, technical assistance and electoral observation within the framework of UNAMI support to Iraq". In a press conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs explained the request and emphasised the need to rebuild public trust and to promote participation.

Having said this, I wish to underline that under all circumstances the elections will be Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led.

Indeed, the responsibility for credible elections lies not only with the Iraqi authorities, but with all Iraqi electoral stakeholders, with all political actors and with all Iraqi citizens - who are called upon to play a greater role in the public sphere.

Animated by a patriotic desire to better their country, the people of Iraq, in particular women and the youth, can seize this opportunity to make their voices heard, as voters or as candidates. And let me also use today's briefing to reaffirm in the clearest of terms that electoral preparations must remain free from political interference, at all stages. Madam President, while we welcome the decrease in attacks on diplomatic missions in recent weeks - the deplorable rocket attacks on November

17 are another stark reminder of the fact that much work remains to be done - including the hard work of broad, meaningful dialogue.

Now, for a variety of reasons, the coming months will be a delicate and crucial period. It should be understood that any form of misinformation, all kind of conspiracies and/or a perceived lack of transparency or commitment, could lead to regrettable and most counterproductive miscalculations.

Meanwhile, Iraq's leadership continues to assert its independence and sovereignty, seeking to maintain all channels of communication open as it builds a foreign policy that serves Iraq's national interest.

The centrality of Iraq in building regional stability is a fact. And it bears repeating that Iraq must be shielded from foreign power rivalries - that Iraqis must be given room to focus on their strength at home.

With regards to the Baghdad-Erbil relations: all of us will agree that a positive and constructive relationship between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region is key to the stability of the whole country.

However, the recent vote in Parliament, on the borrowing law, has shown us - once again - how brittle this relationship is.

Let us be reminded that it takes two to tango. We expect both parties to keep their side of the bargain. We expect both parties to demonstrate transparency - be it on revenue management or on countless other contentious issues.

It should be clear, however, that a Kurdish Region public servant is not only a Kurdish Region public servant: she or he is also an Iraqi citizen.

The payment of public civil servants should be shielded from political disputes, they cannot and should not be

collectively victimized. A solution is urgent, and political will to find a way out will - once more - be of the greatest importance.

Now, as I emphasized during my most recent briefing: constructive negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil are hampered by unclear constitutional guidance. And this ambiguity - unfortunately - takes a daily toll on the numerous outstanding issues.

In the past 15 years, many opportunities to arrive at a clear set of principles, rules and guidelines have been wasted. But agreement must now urgently be found on how to enhance the federal system.

And yes, with many other pressing issues on their plate, Iraq's leaders and politicians may be tempted to ignore this issue. But the bitter truth is: as long as no lasting solutions are found, the relationship will not get any better. On the contrary.

Madam President, the desire of the Iraqi government to rapidly resolve internal displacement is both understandable and justified.

However, in the absence of sufficient durable solutions, serious concerns around the planning and implementation of camp closures and consolidation came to the fore in recent weeks.

While we fully understand that Iraqi authorities are working under tremendous time pressure, it must be clear that camp closures should not lead to another crisis - for instance in the form of secondary displacement, which is already occurring.

In coordination with the Iraqi authorities, we continue our work on a joint 'durable solutions' plan, while at the same time extending lifesaving services to the IDPs who are not able to find safe and affordable



Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 24th November 2020 videoteleconference *(continued)*

accommodation.

Let me move on to Sinjar, Madam President.

A hard-won agreement was signed between Baghdad and Erbil in early October. An important agreement, as it could pave the way for a new chapter for Sinjar, for all Sinjaris.

A chapter in which the interests of the Sinjari people will come first. A chapter in which reconstruction will be accelerated and public service delivery improved. A chapter in which displaced Sinjaris can return home.

Admittedly, signing off on such an agreement is just a very first step. As I emphasized to all stakeholders and Sinjari-representatives during a joint meeting in Mosul last week: swift, decisive and well-coordinated implementation will now prove essential. Stable security structures are priority number one, followed by a unified administration.

With your permission, I will now turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Despite the difficult circumstances imposed by the pandemic, I am pleased to report that - under the aegis of the



International Committee of the Red Cross, and with assistance from UNAMI - the Government of Iraq, on 16 September, handed over - to Kuwait - the remains of 20 persons exhumed from a mass grave site in southern Iraq last January.

This step marks Iraq's continuous commitment to bring this humanitarian file to a close.

Another important development took place two days ago:

the Kuwaiti authorities publicly confirmed the identification of the human remains of 7 persons as Kuwaiti missing nationals, thereby hopefully bringing some closure to their families.

Madam President, in closing, I would like to call for continued solidarity with

the people of Iraq.

Of course, with the ongoing global pandemic, the many challenges faced by all nations are well understood. And it may be easy to lose sight of Iraqis' hopes and dreams at this critical juncture in their modern history.

But if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that local problems hardly ever remain local, and that domestic trouble rapidly translates into trouble abroad.

In other words: Your continued support is vital, and much appreciated.

Thank you."

Video of the briefing is available at <https://bit.ly/33fFbIh>

Security Council press statement on Iraq-Kuwait relations

New York, 24 November 2020 - The members of the Security Council welcomed the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait in the search for missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. They noted the repatriation of human remains, believed to be of Kuwaiti citizens, from the Government of Iraq to the Government of Kuwait on 16 September 2020 and on 8 August 2019. The members of the Security Council thanked the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for providing logistical support.

The members of the Security Council commended the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and

the Tripartite Mechanism for their role in the implementation of resolution 2107 (2013) to resolve outstanding issues related to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. They welcomed the sustained commitment of the Government of Iraq to return all remaining Kuwaiti property and encouraged the Government of Iraq to continue its search for the missing property, in particular to reinvigorate its search for the missing Kuwaiti national archives.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their deepest sympathy to the families of the missing and expressed their condolences for the

lives lost. They welcomed the recent identification by the relevant Kuwaiti authorities of the remains of seven Kuwaiti missing persons and expressed their hope that the work of the Kuwaiti forensic team to complete identification of the other human remains transferred to Kuwait by the Iraqi authorities would be concluded at the earliest opportunity in order to bring relief to the families of the missing.

The members of the Security Council expressed their appreciation to the Government of Iraq for its efforts to fulfil all remaining obligations in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Political Situation

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 29 November 2020 - Condemning the recent violence, UNAMI laments the loss of life and

injuries among Iraqi protesters. We call for calm and urge the authorities to do the utmost to protect peaceful

demonstrators, ensuring perpetrators of violence are held accountable.

DPPA: After a challenging year, signs of hope in global peace efforts

New York, 26 December 2020 – In the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' End of Year news article, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs said:

"The past year was exceedingly difficult by any measure. Violent conflict, unchecked climate change, repression of political activity and other human rights violations, toxic populism dividing societies and a once-in-a-lifetime health catastrophe: 2020 will have left a painful mark.

At the same time, there were unmistakable reasons for hope. Despite the very real worry about the state of multilateralism, countries around the world strongly reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation and solidarity to deal with global problems. Most inspiring, perhaps, has



been to witness the determination and courage shown by people in all regions to have a say in the way they are governed. From mass demonstrations against repression and corruption to record levels of participation in elections, women and men everywhere, young and old, refused to give in to despair. This, in turn, gives us hope as we continue to help parties to conflict reach political solutions. The Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire so that all efforts could be channeled to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic led to several truces and boosted different peace processes. Much more remains to be done, however. That is why, as you will gather from their words below, our colleagues leading peace and political processes globally are more determined than ever to help silence the guns and work with our partners to build lasting peace for hundreds of millions of people, in 2021 and beyond". In the same article Iraq was also mentioned.

Q: "After a difficult 2020, where do we/the process stand(s) now?"

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative for Iraq: "Interlinked, mutually reinforcing crises have forced the government into crisis-management mode, slowing desired progress on building domestic resilience, including issues such as economic diversification, political



accountability and transparency. Parliamentary early elections, a key demand of the popular demonstrations, are set for 6 June 2021. Iraq remains at a critical juncture".

Q: "What would you like to see regarding the situation you oversee in 2021?"

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative for Iraq: "Multiple challenges lie ahead, with domestic, regional and global implications. The priority is to deal with pressing health, economic, security and fiscal crises, hold credible elections, maintain unity and shield Iraq from regional tensions. All stakeholders must commit to pave the way for a more united, just and prosperous Iraq: these are the fundamental, and unwavering, hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people".

Full article is available at <https://bit.ly/2KrwvIU>

Social Cohesion

National youth conference calls for more youth participation in charting country's future

Baghdad, 22 November 2020 – Iraqi youth should take an enhanced role in charting their country's future political course and economic and social development, according to recommendations made at a national conference that was held today in Baghdad. The event was the culmination of 18 workshops, one in each governorate, that brought together hundreds of young people over the last eighteen months to discuss their contribution to shaping Iraq's future.

Organized by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in cooperation with the Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace in the Prime Minister's Office and the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, a total of 334 men and 246 women from diverse

backgrounds participated in "Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability" workshops. Participants, including students, young professionals, social activists and the

unemployed, all aged between 18 and 30, issued a consistent message in all workshops: the youth want their voices heard and to have more say in running their country.



National youth conference calls for more youth participation in charting country’s future *(continued)*

The national conference in Baghdad comprised 17 women and 16 men who presented conclusions and recommendations from the governorate workshops to senior officials and government representatives. The recommendations included enhancing the role of youth in decision-making processes; fostering young people’s political participation and economic empowerment; strengthening the rule of law and law enforcement; improving local employment and investment opportunities; asserting state control over weapons; protecting women from domestic violence; protecting the environment; and overcoming tribal conflicts.

The government officials present included Head of the National Investment Commission Suha al-Najjar; chair of the Council of Representatives’ Committee on Youth and Sports Abbas Ulaiwi; Women, Family and Childhood Committee Chair Maysoun al Sa’idi; head of the

Coexistence and Societal Peace Committee and advisor to the Prime Minister, Hosham Dawood; and a representative of the Youth and Sport Ministry, Akram Atwan. In their opening remarks and ensuing discussion with the youth, all officials agreed that engaging the young generation is crucial to achieve the social, political and economic reforms necessary for the future prosperity and stability of the country. They affirmed that the recommendations will be addressed by relevant government bodies, including those which require enactment of legislation by the Council of Representatives.

Addressing the conference, Deputy Special Representative of UNAMI Alice Walpole said: “Your presence here today and your inspirational contributions throughout our youth workshops, give me confidence that the youth of Iraq is ready for the challenge of finding collaborative, creative ways to address the challenges facing your

country.”

“Whether you chose to run as a candidate, to assist in a political campaign, to observe the electoral process, and of course simply by exercising your right to vote, I encourage you to seize the opportunity to make your voice heard,” she added.

Video available at <https://www.facebook.com/462856000413099/videos/378449900078008>



“Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability” virtual workshop held in Dhi Qar



Baghdad/Nasiriya, 2 November 2020 - Twenty-eight young men and women from Dhi Qar Governorate participated in a three-day virtual workshop, from 29th October to 1st November 2020, to discuss their role in addressing challenges facing their communities. Held under the theme “Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability”, this workshop was the eighteenth, and final one, in a series organised by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in cooperation with the Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace in the Prime Minister’s Office and the Iraqi

Al-Amal Association. All four workshops convened in 2020, including in Dhi Qar, took place online due to the ongoing health crisis. The workshop provided an opportunity for these young men and women to discuss a number of issues they identified as important in their Governorate. These included: enhancing the role of youth in decision-making processes; fostering young people’s economic empowerment; strengthening the rule of law and law enforcement in Dhi Qar; improving local employment and investment opportunities; asserting

state control over weapons; protecting women from domestic violence; and providing better public services.

At the closing session on 1st November, workshop participants had an opportunity to share their views and conclusions with local officials, including Members of Parliament, the Director of Youth & Sport in Dhi Qar and representatives from the Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace in the Prime Minister’s Office, in the presence of the United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Iraq, Alice Walpole.

Ms. Walpole encouraged participants to speak their mind and contribute their ideas on how to overcome the challenges facing Iraq, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and its health and financial burden on the country. “Young people leading the public demonstrations for national reform over the past year have initiated fundamental political and social change in Iraq. They have reminded the political elite that Iraq’s youth must be consulted in political, social, economic and reconciliation efforts [...]. If we are to create a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Iraq, we need you as partners and leaders,” she said.

IOM Iraq promotes public dialogue on critical issues related to stabilization and conflict resolution in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate

Erbil, 24 November 2020 - IOM Iraq has partnered with Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of peace and development in Iraq, to promote public dialogue on critical issues related to stabilization and conflict resolution in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate. Through the project, funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development, IOM Iraq and EPIC will work to build the capacity of community-based organizations, including local disabled persons organizations, in Sinjar — through training, coaching and mentoring. Participants in these trainings will be able to enhance their technical skills and be provided with a platform to convey positive messages to the population at large in Sinjar, amplifying community views, concerns and wishes through new multi-media platforms.

The first training sessions focused on video production, support to effective communication, education, and outreach. On 13-14 November, EPIC led a workshop in Erbil on digital and



social media for seven participants representing community organizations from Sinjar. This workshop focused on integrating peacebuilding and stabilization concepts in project strategies, and techniques for using Facebook and YouTube.

On 4-5 December the training focused on the production of videos— the

participants were introduced to technical skills such as setting up sound, lighting, and video equipment; conducting interviews; filming; recording voiceovers; and capturing b-roll. The training also addressed story structure to help the participants design and develop the stories that they will produce under the project.

Iraq launches Youth, Peace & Security Coalition

Baghdad, 11 December 2020 - On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the 2250 UN Security Council Resolution, Iraq launched the National Coalition for Youth, Peace, Security, under the auspices of the Minister of Youth & Sports, Adnan Darjal.

The Coalition supported by the Ministry of Youth & Sports, UNFPA, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Swedish Government, and Peace And Freedom Organization, is the result of the UNSC resolution 2250 on youth engagement in the peace-building process and conflict resolution. The resolution was adopted in 2015 to shed light on the role of youth in establishing healthy communities that build on conflict-resolution reasoning and prevention of violence and extremism.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ms Jayathma Wickramanayake addressed the participants via a video message and congratulated Iraq on achieving the first and very important step towards localising the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in Iraq, and setting the example for youth-led, inter-generational, inter-governmental

efforts and partnerships for other countries.

During his speech, Minister Darjal praised the efforts exerted by young people to deliver messages of peace and security despite the challenges they face. He expressed his support to initiatives that will further bolster the civic participation and community engagement of young men and women across Iraq.

Commenting on UNFPA support to the Coalition, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, said: “Young people in Iraq represent a significant driver for change and a major asset for the country's peaceful and sustainable development. We trust that the Youth, Peace, & Security Coalition will bring all young Iraqis together to agree on a vision, advance their ideas forward and create a movement that will translate



Iraq launches Youth, Peace & Security Coalition *(Continued)*

young people's dream into actions." She emphasised the importance of girls engagement and empowerment in the decision-making process and their representation in the Coalition.

The Counsellor for Development Cooperation at the Swedish Embassy in Iraq, Mr Christoffer Burnett-Cargill said: "The future development of Iraq lies in the hand of the Iraqi people. We are here to help, support and partner with you. Iraq leads on its own, with strong national ownership and participation of its people. Iraq should be proud of its youth who wants to influence its society, have ideas and demands, and raising their voices for

peaceful relations, democracy and rule of law."

For his part, the Process Lead for Youth, Peace and Security at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Mr Julius Kramer, said: "Young Iraqis are leading the way for peace and coexistence in their communities. They deserve support and empowerment to do even more - and to be included in decision-making at all levels. Over the past year, we have partnered with young people in building the Iraqi Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security. The goal of the Coalition is to strengthen the participation of young women and men in building a peaceful Iraq."

The Youth, Peace and Security Coalition brings together young peacebuilders, government, NGOs and the international community on common ground. It gives equal representation for men and women and acknowledges the role of young women in decision making, conflict resolution and mediation. The coalition offers youth a joint platform where they can drive forward their priorities, advocate for their interests and needs and promote the effective participation of young people in the decision-making process especially those related to peace and security.

Peace building training held in Najaf

Baghdad, 14 December 2020 - The Bent al-Rafidain Organization, with support from IOM, organized a five-day peace building training.

"I have always loved volunteer work; when my mother shared the announcement about Bent Al-Rafidain training with me I decided to join because I love to help people.

I learned a lot from the training and it boosted my self-confidence. After the theoretical training we split up into teams and headed for the field in the three locations in Najaf to work on an awareness raising campaign about COVID-19 which promoted social distancing and other precautions.

We succeeded in changing many people's perception about the risks of the pandemic and that made me happy. I would love to keep helping people and work on social cohesion programmes, to

set an example for other women and encourage them to get involved in changing society's perception of us.

The society is in need of many things that the youth can work on and change society for the better, such as cleaning

campaigns and tree planting, or educating people on serious issues such as early marriage or the exclusion of girls from education," said Noor, one of the participants in the Civil society organization activities in Najaf.



Electoral

Iraq's electoral preparations and processes updates

Baghdad, November/December 2020 - Since September 2020, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been issuing monthly reports on electoral preparations in Iraq, in conformity with its mandate under Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) to provide electoral assistance and advice to the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission.

November 2020 edition (that covers activities in October 2020) highlights the following topics:

- The Council of Representatives finally

approves the distribution of electoral constituencies in all eighteen governorates.

- IHEC, awaiting confirmation of the electoral budget, continues with electoral preparations, including resumption of biometric voter registration and preparations for an audit of electoral IT and results management systems.

- New IHEC Directors-General and managers of governorate electoral offices assume their functions; further key positions remain to be finalised.

Despite some challenges initially encountered in the appointment of

Directors-General and governorate managers, IHEC recruitment is nearing completion. This will enable IHEC to focus squarely now on electoral preparations, including on-the-job capacity-building for new officials and staff. At IHEC's request, UNAMI is preparing an induction training package for newly-appointed electoral officials.

Full report is available at https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&layout=category&task=category&id=207&Itemid=738&lang=en

Iraq's electoral preparations and processes updates

December edition covers the following topics:

- The electoral legislation approved by Parliament becomes law.
- The electoral budget is submitted for parliamentary approval.
- Iraq requests the United Nations Security Council to provide UN observers at the June 2021 parliamentary elections.
- IHEC and Ministry of Interior sign a cooperation agreement on voter registration

On 5 November, the President of Iraq ratified the Law for the Election of Iraq's Council of Representatives (CoR Election Law No. 9 of 2020). The law came into effect on 9 November following publication in the official gazette. It makes provision for 329 parliamentary seats to be contested in the upcoming parliamentary elections, of which 25% (83 seats) are reserved for women, in line with constitutional provisions, and nine are reserved for minority representatives (5 Christians, 1 Yezidi, 1 Shabak, 1 Sabeen Mandeian and 1 Fayli Kurd). Each governorate will be divided into several constituencies, with a country-wide total of 83 constituencies. Each constituency will return 3-5 members of parliament, depending on its population density.

Now that the electoral law has come into force, IHEC is working on the necessary implementing regulations. A committee composed of several IHEC

commissioners and IHEC legal staff is currently reviewing draft regulations prior to submission for approval by the Board of Commissioners. UNAMI is providing technical inputs to the committee.

On 20 November, the Government of Iraq made a formal request to the United Nations Security Council for UN observation of the 6 June 2021 parliamentary elections, to help strengthen public trust in the electoral process. The Security Council has yet to respond.

Technical preparations for the elections continue. It is hard to assess progress in the absence of a formal electoral operational plan and timeline (see below). IHEC has established numerous committees to follow up on activities, but it is not clear how these various undertakings are integrated at the technical or policy level. There is slow but steady progress on efforts to expand biometric data collection and speed up card distribution coverage; the development of regulations and procedures; the finalization of procurement plans; an audit of electoral IT systems, and public outreach initiatives.

The UN continues to assist the IHEC Board of Commissioners in bridging capacity gaps, although the UN-led international electoral support project has yet to receive the necessary funding transfers from donors to launch recruitment and deployment of UN electoral advisors. These advisors are

urgently needed on the ground to provide technical expertise and advisory support to IHEC: it is UNAMI's hope that an imminent release of donor funds will enable the first deployments to take place in early January 2021.

Invitations for international observation On 26 November, IHEC forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invitation letters for international observation of the national elections set for next June. On the basis of a list provided by the Ministry, a total of 53 embassies and representations in Iraq are invited to consider deploying electoral observers. Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes - Report No. 4 Baghdad, 10 December 2020 5 Separate invitation letters will be sent to 19 international organisations with expertise in electoral observation. This is similar to previous invitations that Iraq has extended to embassies and international organizations to observe its electoral processes. This is separate from the exceptional Iraqi request submitted to the UN Security Council for UN electoral observation. However, if and when the Council considers Iraq's request, the coordination of all international observation efforts will be further defined.

The fourth report is available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc>.

UN signs financing agreement with France to support electoral capacity development in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 November 2020 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of EUR 1 million from France to a UN-led project to support and assist the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The contribution will help deploy UN electoral advisers as IHEC prepares for upcoming elections.

"The upcoming elections are an opportunity for Iraqis to make their voice heard and this contribution shows the strong and continued support of France to Iraq", said Bruno Aubert, Ambassador of France in Iraq.

UNDP signed an agreement with the Government of France on behalf of UNAMI to manage the financing and administration of the project, which UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine



Hennis-Plasschaert said "reflects the importance of a concerted international response to Iraq's electoral needs". The UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq,

Zena Ali Ahmad, said: "Iraqis deserve a fair and transparent election process – one that ensures their needs are heard and ultimately met."

UN signs financing agreement with the Netherlands to support UN electoral assistance to Iraq

Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of EUR 3 million from the Netherlands to a UN-led project to support and assist capacity-building within the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The Dutch funding will also support deployment of UN electoral advisers as IHEC prepares the June 2021 national elections. "The Netherlands is pleased to maintain its support to Iraq and

specifically its electoral process. Free and fair elections are essential to further strengthen the voice of the Iraqi people," said Michel Rentenaar, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Iraq. On behalf of UNAMI, UNDP signed an agreement with the Netherlands to manage the financing and administration of the project. The United Nations thanks the Netherlands for its contribution, which has enhanced support to the process of holding free, fair and transparent

elections in Iraq.



UN signs financing agreement with Germany to support UN electoral assistance to Iraq

Baghdad, 10 December 2020 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of USD 7.25 million from Germany to a UN-led project to support and assist capacity-building within the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The German funding will also support deployment of UN electoral advisers as IHEC prepares the June 2021 national elections. "With our contribution to Iraq's electoral process, Germany continues to support joint stabilization efforts in the country. Guaranteeing democratic, transparent and inclusive elections, as well as a safe environment for both voters and candidates, are fundamental to increasing democratic participation, credibility of state institutions as well as their accountability," said Dr. Ole Diehl, Ambassador of Germany to Iraq.

On behalf of UNAMI, UNDP signed an agreement with Germany to manage the financing and administration of the project. The United Nations thanks

Germany for its contribution, which strengthens support to the process of holding free, fair and transparent elections in Iraq.



Political Consultations



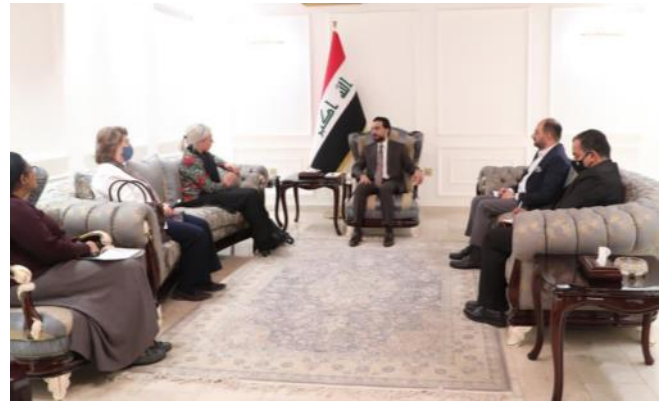
Baghdad, 31 October 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plaschaert, met today with the National Security Adviser, Mr. Qassim al-Araji. They discussed the current political, human rights and security situation in the country. Photo courtesy of the Office of the National Security Adviser.



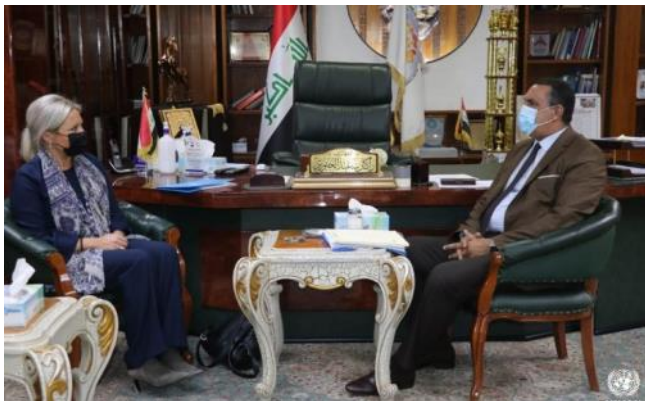
Erbil, 4 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plaschaert, met in Erbil with Mr. Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country and the region, as well as the recent agreement between the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government on the status of Sinjar district in Ninewa. Photo courtesy of the Office of the KR Deputy Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 9 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met in Baghdad with the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), Mr. Jalil Adnan Khalaf. They discussed preparations for the forthcoming early elections in Iraq, including the strengthening of UN electoral assistance. Photo courtesy of Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).



Baghdad, 10 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG and Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Mohammed al-Halbousi. They discussed the current political and humanitarian situation in the country, with special emphasis on the preparations for early elections and the closure of camps for internally displaced persons. Photo courtesy of CoR Media Office.



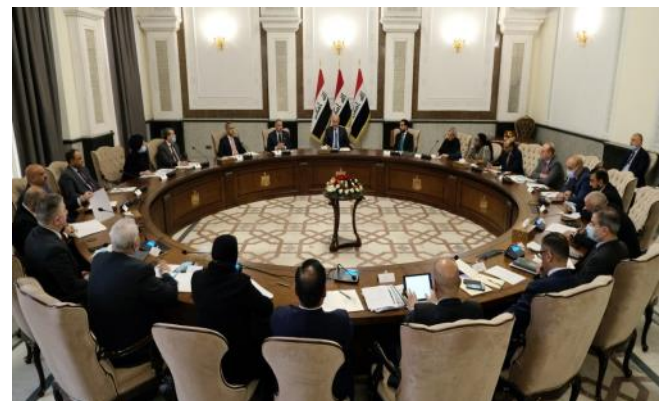
Kirkuk, 12 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Acting Governor of Kirkuk, Mr. Rakan Al-Jubouri. They discussed the current political and humanitarian situation in the Governorate, including efforts to hold parliamentary elections in a safe environment.



Baghdad, 14 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the President of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Barham Salih. They discussed the political and security situation in the country, notably preparations for the upcoming early elections and the fight against remaining ISIL cells. Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.



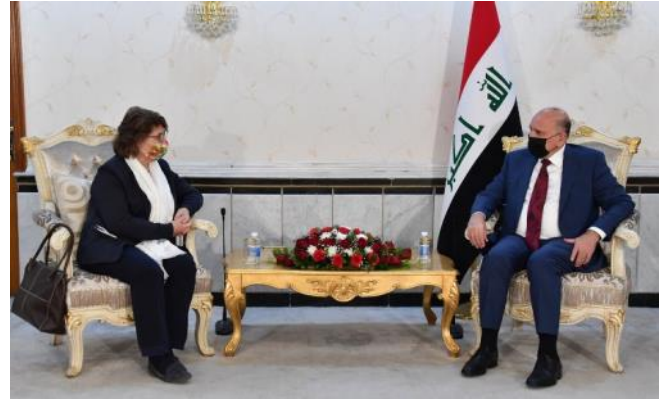
Baghdad, 15 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Mustafa al-Kadhimi. They discussed the current political and humanitarian situation in the country, with special emphasis on the preparations for the upcoming early elections. Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 16 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended a meeting between the three presidencies, the Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, and the Independent High Electoral Commission. The meeting addressed important elements of the preparations for the upcoming early elections in Iraq, such as biometric voter registration and the auditing of electronic results management systems. The UN reiterated its commitment to provide electoral assistance and advice to the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission. Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.



Baghdad, 16 November 2020 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) / Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Minister of Planning, Dr. Khalid Batal Najim. They discussed numerous cooperation opportunities between the United Nations and the Republic of Iraq in the fields of food security, humanitarian and developmental affairs. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.



Baghdad, 17 November 2020 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Fuad Hussein. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

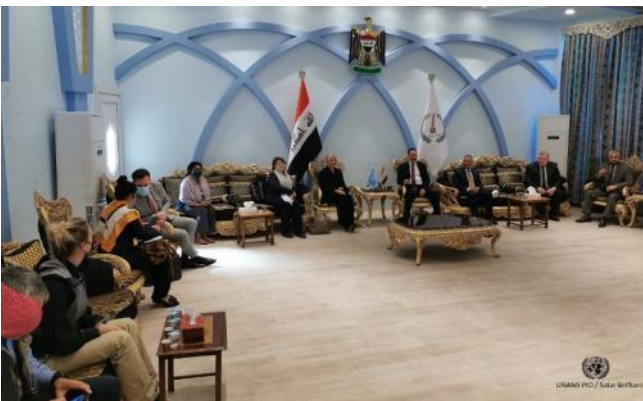


Erbil, 17 November 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today a meeting of the Iraqi National Security Adviser, Mr. Qassim Al-Araji, and Kurdistan Region Minister of Interior, Mr. Réber Ahmed, at which the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement was discussed.

Photo courtesy of the MoI KRG.



Erbil, 18 November 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met with the President of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed a broad range of topics, including the Sinjar Agreement and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Kurdistan Region President.



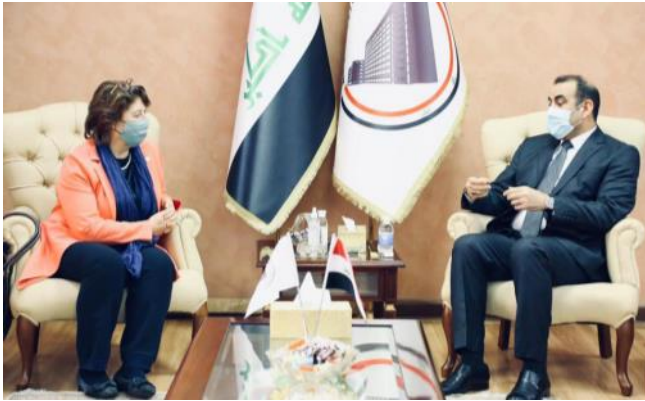
Mosul, 19 November 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Nineveh Governor, Mr. Najm al-Jabouri, and all components of Sinjar. They discussed the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement in order to create stability and security in the area and allow for its reconstruction as well as the return of the internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Addressing the meeting, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said: "Allow me to once again recall the horrific ordeal that Sinjar's recent history has witnessed, culminating in the heinous crimes committed by Da'esh. These atrocities are undoubtedly a vivid and ongoing trauma for the victims and for the Sinjar community at large.

Secondly, while you - Sinjaris - urgently needed to rebuild your lives, you have faced obstacles for far too long. Obstacles due to discord and dispute on security arrangements, on public service provision, and on a unified administration. And all of it had a great impact on the ground. Nevertheless, in their darkest hour and against all odds, many Sinjaris remained (and remain) determined to build a better future.

When the federal and Kurdish regional government recently (and finally) agreed on a number of principles and steps to overcome these discords and disputes...I was hopeful. Hopeful because this could pave the way for a new chapter for Sinjar, for all Sinjaris. A chapter in which the interests of the Sinjari people will come first. One in which reconstruction will be accelerated. One in which public service delivery will be improved. And one in which displaced people can return home.

But for all of that to happen, stable governance and stable security structures are urgently needed. It is (in a way) the basis for any form of progress. And this is exactly what is being acknowledged in what is being called the government-to-government agreement. And true, signing off on such agreement is just a very first step. Sound implementation will prove essential."



Baghdad, 29 November 2020 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Minister of Planning, Dr. Khalid Battal al-Najm. During the meeting, they discussed their continued good cooperation and engaged in areas of future engagements, such as the implementation of the National Development Plan. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.



Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, together with the UNESCO Director to Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani, met today with the Minister of Water Resources, Engineer Mahdi Rasheed al-Hamadani. During the meeting, they discussed Iraq's Water Resource Strategy and potential future engagements with the United Nations. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Water Resources.



Erbil, 09 December 2020 – The Head of the UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez, met today with the Co-President of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Mr. Bafel Talabani. They discussed the political and humanitarian situation in the Region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations.



Erbil, 13 December 2020 – The Head of the UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez, met today with the Deputy Minister, Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Region Government, Mr. Daban Shadala. They discussed the political situation in the Region, as well as Baghdad-Erbil relations.



Kirkuk, 14 December 2020 - The Acting Governor of Kirkuk, Mr. Rakan Al-Jubouri, received today Ms. Laura Romanazzi, Head of the UNAMI Kirkuk Office. They discussed the importance of maintaining peaceful coexistence in Kirkuk and need to provide public services and security to all. UNAMI expressed support for the Governor's efforts to promote stability and reconstruction in liberated areas, and to assist returnees in Hawija and in other areas of the Governorate.



Erbil, 20 December 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region, Mr. Masrour Barzani. They discussed the current political and economic situation in Iraq with special emphasis on Baghdad-Erbil relations. Photo courtesy of the Kurdistan Regional Government.



Erbil, 20 December 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with Mr. Salahuddin Muhammad Bahaauddin, Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Islamic Union. They discussed the current political and economic situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan region in particular. Photo courtesy of the Kurdistan Islamic Union.



Erbil, 21 December 2020 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with journalists and civil society activists, some of whom had been arrested during recent demonstrations in Sulaimaniyah. They discussed protests and latest events, emphasizing the importance of freedom of expression and of the press.



Erbil, 21 December 2020 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Mr. Omar Sayd Ali, General Coordinator of Gorran Movement. They discussed the current political and economic situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan region in particular, with emphasis on Baghdad-Erbil relations and the recent demonstrations in Kurdistan region and Suleyimania in particular.

Photo courtesy of the Gorran Movement.



Erbil, 21 December 2020 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the President of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed the current political, economic and security situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan region in particular, with special emphasis on Baghdad-Erbil relations.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Kurdistan Region Presidency.



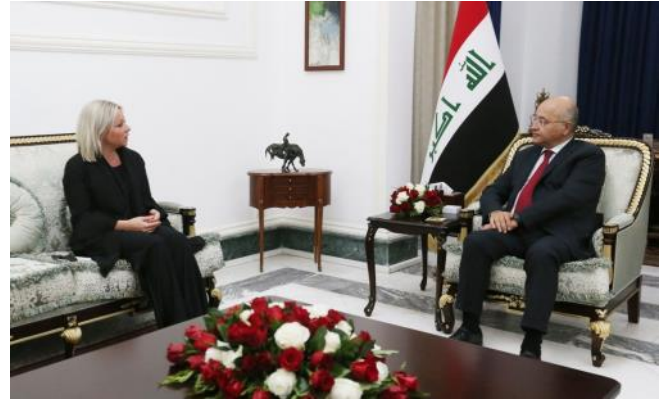
Erbil, 21 December 2020 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Co-leader, Mr. Lahur Sheikh Jangi. They discussed the current political and economic situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan region in particular, with emphasis on Baghdad-Erbil relations. Discussion also focused on the recent demonstrations in Kurdistan region and Suleyimania in particular. Photos courtesy of the PUKmedia.



Baghdad, 23 December 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Mr. Murad Ismael, a Yazidi Activist. They discussed the Sinjar Agreement and the general situation of the Yazidi community in Iraq. Photo courtesy of Mr. Ismael.



Baghdad, 28 December 2020 – The Special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Iraqi National Security Adviser, Mr. Qassim Al-Araji. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country and the region, including the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement.
Photo from Archive.



Baghdad, 29 December 2020 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the President of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Dr. Barham Salih. They discussed the political and security situation in the country, as well as the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections.
Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Presidency.

Security

UNICEF's Lasseko: "We are very sad that yesterday's attack in Baghdad killed a baby and injured several people"

Baghdad, 18 November 2020 - Ms. Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, issued the following statement following a bombing attack in Baghdad:

"We are very sad that yesterday's attack in Baghdad killed a baby and injured several people.

Homes are meant to be the safest place for children. It is a place where they are protected and surrounded with the love and care of their families.

Violence has been the norm in Iraq for nearly four decades now with children always bearing the brunt.

We call on all parties in Iraq to protect

children at all times and refrain from attacking civilians, civilian infrastructure and populated areas including people's homes.

It is time that children in Iraq get the respite they so much deserve. It is time for violence to come to an end once and for all in a country that has been paying heavily over the past 40 years."



At least three children killed and another two injured in Iraq this week

Baghdad, 10 December 2020 – Ms. Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, issued the following statement:

"UNICEF is deeply saddened to confirm that three children were killed in Sulaymaniyah and Sinjar in the north of Iraq, another two were injured this week.

In Sinjar, two children were killed and another two injured when an unexploded ordinance went off. This is a stark reminder that landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to threaten the lives of children in Iraq. In Sulaymaniyah, at least one child was killed during the ongoing wave of

protests in the governorate.

UNICEF strongly urges all parties to protect children and keep them out of harm's way.

Children should be safe everywhere, in their homes, neighborhoods, and on the streets. This continued violence and disregard for children's safety should stop.

Children's right to live in safety, protected from all forms of violence, is a right that is enshrined in the United Nation's Convention for the Rights of the Child. Iraq is a signatory of the Convention and must therefore do all that it can to ensure that every boy and girl can live in safety and dignity."



Launch of the research study on “Needs and challenges: Iraqi women running for elected office”

Baghdad/Beirut, 31 October 2020 –

Women's participation in political processes in Iraq is hampered by many obstacles, despite Iraqi women's determination to engage in the public sphere. In 2020, Iraq ranked 70th worldwide in terms of women holding seats in parliament.

These findings are highlighted in a new report issued today by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Iraq Foundation, which documents the challenges faced by women running for elected public office and the factors influencing voter choices regarding women candidates. The report also proposes a set of recommendations to overcome these challenges.

Here are the remarks made by the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Alice Walpole, at the virtual launch of the research study on “Needs and Challenges: Iraqi Women Running for Elected Office”:

"Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

A salaam aleykum!

I'm delighted to welcome you to this webinar to launch our report on “Women Running for Elected Office in Iraq: Needs and Challenges”. As you are aware, this week marks the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. That important resolution formally recognised, for the first time, the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in conflict resolution and political decision-making at all levels in every country. Twenty years and ten further resolutions later, it is disappointingly clear that this promise, this commitment, has not yet been realised.

So, what do we mean by the ‘meaningful participation’ of women? We mean, simply, that women's views and voices need to be heard when



countries are making decisions about their future direction, when they are drawing up their government programmes, when they are negotiating for peace, when they are developing strategies in every area of society. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), coordinating with the wider UN family, has been at the forefront of efforts here in Iraq to support the government, key institutions such as the Independent High Electoral Commission and civil society to increase the participation of women in politics and positions of influence in public life. Iraq faces many challenges – it cannot afford to ignore the experience, expertise, talents of the female half of its population.

UNAMI's support for women's empowerment includes the provision of technical expertise and training to state institutions to increase gender-awareness in their activities; the promotion of dialogue between civil society and government entities on the draft second Iraqi national action plan on resolution 1325; and support to female activists who have a valuable contribution to make to Iraqi public life, including members of our Women's Advisory Group.

However, much remains to be done to

translate grassroots Iraqi women's leadership, which we see in abundance, into leadership in formal positions. Women are already leading community efforts to address challenges such as creating awareness on mitigating the spread of COVID-19, supporting survivors of gender-based violence, promoting peace and reconciliation between components at local levels and organising peaceful demonstrations calling for positive change. Women must be able to bring that expertise to participate fully and equally at the regional and national level. That includes as holders of senior roles in state institutions such as the civil service and judiciary, as parliamentary candidates, as civil society leaders and as community members.

Women's meaningful participation does not just mean increasing the numbers of women in public life – although that's a good start! It also means pursuing pro-women legislation; it means politics that address issues of concern to women, such as domestic violence; it means removing barriers that impede women's equal participation in decision-making. The research study that we are discussing today provides a compelling picture of the challenges women encounter when entering politics, suggests what could help them move ahead; and identifies areas where some simple changes would make a huge difference to women's access to the political arena.

I found it a really interesting study and I'm looking forward to our conference today. I hope our discussion will result in your renewed commitment to supporting Iraqi women's full and equal participation in public life.”

KUDO Launch of the Report on Women Running for El...



Trainings to hone Iraqi women's leadership, communications and advocacy skills

Baghdad, 07 November 2020 – The last of a series of workshops held across Iraq and intended to strengthen the political and public roles of women concluded in Baghdad today.

The closing workshop in Baghdad provided training for women in the areas of leadership, communications and advocacy, one of the recommendations of a research study on the needs and challenges of Iraqi women running for elected public office that was launched on the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on 31 October. Organized by Iraq Foundation and supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), with the workshops held over the last two months in Baghdad, Diwaniya, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Basra, Najaf and Ninewa brought together 67 women aged 25 to 35 to discuss how best to advance their careers in public office.

“I hope that by the end of this four-day training, you will have been better equipped to transform your leadership potential into tangible skills that will, insha'a Allah, help enable you to enter political office or any other formal public space as agents of positive change for the futures,” Ms. Alice Walpole, Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, said in remarks at the Baghdad workshop.

Ms. Rend al Rahim, a former Iraqi ambassador to the United States and President of Iraq Foundation, which along with UNAMI and UN ESCWA commissioned the research study, noted

that “the training responds to the need, identified by the research study, to enhance the skills and capabilities of young women to take a leadership role in public life and in the political arena.” Also present at the Baghdad workshop was Dr. Yousra Kareem Mohsen, Acting Director-General, Women Empowerment Directorate.

Rana, one of the participants in Baghdad, underlined the importance of the timing of the exercise as the country prepares for early elections scheduled for June 2021, as well as its technical benefits and its valuable boost to self-confidence. “Participation [in public life] is not impossible because I am young and I have political ambition.”

Speaking at the Diwaniyah workshop, Abeer said the workshop was an excellent opportunity to learn new skills, gather new information and



experiences in light of the current circumstances and the great challenges facing women. “The lack of training and activities in the governorates affected us negatively. This training brought back hope to our souls.”



Workshop aimed to build the capacities of GBV survivors, and to provide them with skills needed to establish and manage small businesses held in Duhok

Duhok, 1 November 2020 - Baghdad Women Association (BWA) organized business skills training workshops benefiting 28 women and girls in Sharia camp, near the village of Siji in Dohuk Governorate, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The workshops were held as part of the “Women, Peace and Security Project in Arab States” carried out in partnership with UN Women through support by the Government of Finland with the aim of empowering gender-based violence (GBV) survivors.

The workshops aimed to build the capacities of the participants, all GBV survivors, and to provide them with

skills needed to establish and manage small businesses, thus focusing on issues such as utilizing resources and

opportunities, crisis management, integrating into the market and management skills.



IOM continues to support female-led businesses through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund

Erbil, 9 November 2020 - An IOM Iraq delegation recently met with the Secretary-General of the High Council of Women Affairs - Iraqi Kurdistan Government, Dr. Khanzad Ahmad, at the High Council of Women Affairs (HCWA) office in Erbil. They discussed activities focused on women's empowerment, IOM's continued collaboration with HCWA, and shared objectives for the future — particularly regarding support for female-led businesses through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF).

The EDF supports SMEs that contribute to economic recovery and private sector development. Since September 2018, a total of 2,895 new



job opportunities have been created in Iraq through EDF.

Visit <http://edf.iom.int/> for more information.

A training workshop on workers' rights, health, occupational safety and life skills held in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 10 November 2020 - The Women Leadership Institute's Safe Space Centre in Kirkuk city, 238 kilometres north of Baghdad, hosted a training workshop on workers' rights, health, occupational safety and life skills in the period November 8-10, 2020.

The workshop was attended by women beneficiaries from the cash-for-work activity held as part of the "Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection (LEAP) project in Iraq", supported by UN Women and the Government of Japan.

The training workshop aimed to enhance the participants' self-confidence, help develop their life skills,

familiarize them with the Iraqi labour law, workers' rights and duties as well as means to face work pressure. In addition, it aimed to help them achieve the balance between their priorities imposed by the new work-from-home situation imposed by COVID-19 pandemic, while highlighting the importance of occupational health and safety and the need to adhere to health instructions.

A total of 40 women and girls took part in the training workshop. They were divided into groups to ensure their safety during the activity as well as to maximize the benefits of active participation by all of them. According to organizers, the beneficiaries had an

active participation, exchanging views on the current situation and voicing concern regarding obstacles that they might face during the current period. They came up with suggestions to obstacles that might arise during their cash-for-work experience.



United States of America continues to fund GBV prevention and response activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 November 2020 - UNHCR welcomes the new generous contribution from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration towards UNHCR's Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response activities for internally displaced persons, returnees, and refugees in Iraq.

GBV remains a major area of concern to UNHCR and is generally underreported due to social stigma, fear of reprisal, and discrimination. Displaced populations experience a heightened risk of GBV, with women and girls disproportionately affected due to several factors, including social and gender norms and reduced economic resources. UNHCR's recent protection monitoring revealed a rise in domestic violence and GBV as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many persons of concern have

lost their livelihood opportunities and can barely make ends meet, which places pressure on families and increases exposure to exploitation and abuse, including the risk that women and children engage in harmful coping mechanisms. This contribution will allow UNHCR to continue providing much needed protection and GBV responses for communities in Iraq.

In particular, this contribution will contribute towards activities aimed at survivor-centered GBV prevention and response, including individual case management, awareness campaigns, capacity building of specialized government and local service providers, psycho-social counselling, and legal services.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Matthew H. Tueller said, "the United States is committed to helping the survivors of gender-based

violence and preventing its occurrence. We have a long history of partnership with UNHCR and are honored to support their work to promote women and girls' safety, security, and access to justice."

UNHCR's Acting Representative Philippa Candler said that "during this particularly critical time, this generous assistance highlights the longstanding engagement and importance the Government of the United States of America has placed on mitigating the impact of gender-based violence on forcibly displaced communities in Iraq and globally. UNHCR will use these funds to strengthen the survivor-based approach in its GBV prevention and response activities in Iraq."

Training workshop held for data collectors who will be working on a survey on the “Role of Women in Leadership Positions in KRI Institutions”

Erbil, 25 November 2020 - The High Council of Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the American University of Iraq, Sulaimania, in partnership with UN Women and UNFPA, organized a two-day training workshop in Erbil in the period 24 to 25 November 2020 for data collectors who will be working on a

survey on the “Role of Women in Leadership Positions in KRI Institutions.”

The survey, which is expected to be conducted in the period December 2020-January 2021, aims to assess barriers that prevent women from assuming leadership roles and participating meaningfully in decision-

making processes, as well as means to overcome barriers that women leaders face while working in KRI institutions.

Additionally, to understand the role and the rank of women in the government institutions, the study aims to assess the knowledge and skill levels of women leaders as well as their education and training needs, in addition to combating issues of discrimination and harassment.

During the two days of training, the data collectors examined the questionnaire and were trained on data collection methods, besides working to create a communication platform for the group.

UN Women and UNFPA Iraq country offices will utilize their strong relations with relevant governmental partners and the American University of Iraq to jointly carry out the survey and to make available the vital data needed to provide evidence and contribute to the government policies and programmes.



1325 @ 20

Discussion forums held in Baghdad and Erbil on the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325

Baghdad/Erbil, 10 November 2020 - UN Women organized a roundtable session in Baghdad on 2 November 2020 on the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

The session, marking the 20th anniversary of the resolution, was held under the patronage of the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers.

In his opening speech, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers Hamid Al-Ghazi, stressed the Iraqi government's keen interest to adopt a national multi-sectoral action plan to implement this UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security, adding that this interest stems from the government's awareness of the importance of empowering women in all fields.

Al-Ghazi highlighted that work on preparing the second Iraq National Action Plan (INAP II) was a participatory process involving governmental, legislative and civil entities, which have formed a team for the plan's final review to ensure the realization of its goals and the removal



of any obstacles that may have impeded the implementation of the first plan.

Secretary General of the High Council of Women's Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Dr. Khanzad Ahmed addressed in her speech conditions in camps hosting refugee and internally displaced persons in Duhok. Dr. Ahmad highlighted hardships faced by women and girls who have been suffering as a result of military conflicts and internal crises in Iraq. She also stressed the need to implement INAP II, which she said was in the best interest of affected women.

Dr. Yusra Kareem Mohsen, Director-

General of the Women's Empowerment Directorate, said resolution 1325 underlines the need for equal participation by women as active partners in the prevention of conflict and as contributors to peace negotiations, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

Meanwhile, UN Women Representative in Iraq and Yemen Dina Zorba stressed the importance of the women, peace, and security agenda as a key pillar of development and stability and a main requirement for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). She added that offering protection to women

Discussion forums held in Baghdad and Erbil on the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (continued)

guarantees social security and stability.

For her part, Assistant Director-General of the Women's Empowerment Directorate Thaera Al Kaflawi outlined the Second National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 and frameworks on which it was based, such as international conventions, declarations, agreements, protocols and UN resolutions complementing UNSCR 1325, as well as local national frameworks, strategic frameworks and national plans.

Haidar Al Awari, Head of Sawa Organization for Human Rights, stressed the importance of activating partnerships between the government and NGOs to implement and follow up on peace initiatives, promote social cohesion and provide a safe environment for women and girls.

Amal Kabashi, Coordinator of the Iraqi Women's Network, stressed the important role carried out by women's civil society organizations in shaping the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and in exercising pressure for its ratification and monitoring its implementation. These organizations, she affirmed, have a key role in monitoring and holding to account all active parties concerned with the plan's implementation. This is due to these NGOs' goals and the role that they play in protecting women's rights, combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and in influencing policies to achieve gender equality, said Kabashi.

Meanwhile, Sanaa Abdel Kazim, representative of the Ministry of Justice, considered the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 as the beginning of a new era for the advancement of women's rights and women's security and stability in Iraq, adding that the resolution stresses the important role of women in peace building and in maintaining and promoting peace and security.

She also indicated that the Ministry of Justice has participated with other concerned parties in periodic discussion sessions to draft the Second National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 and that the plan included three pillars: participation, protection and prevention. The Ministry of Justice is among the ministries responsible for implementing two of the pillars: the participation and protection pillars.

Meanwhile, Eman Abdul Rahman, Head of the Iraqi Resolution 1325 Network, said in her remarks: "Weapons do not make us any safer as was evident during

the COVID-19 pandemic when we witnessed a rise in the number of cases of violence against women, especially domestic violence. Nonetheless, we also saw large success achieved by women's organizations in the COVID-19 response".

Dr. Wafaa Al Mahdawi, professor of Economics at Al Mustansiriya University, made a presentation explaining the economic costs of violence against women. Her presentation included figures and statistics explaining the development of this phenomenon and its effects on women and on society as a whole.

Participants in the roundtable outlined the important role played by civil society organizations in the action plan's preparation and development.

In addition, they discussed requirements to achieve the plan's goals in view of the current conditions, including new realities imposed by COVID-19, emphasizing the need for the concerned authorities to approve the plan and finance its implementation.

The participants also underlined the importance of the active partnership between the government, civil society organizations and UN agencies.

In collaboration with UN Women, the High Council of Women Affairs (HCWA) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) organized on 10 November 2020 a discussion forum in Erbil on the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Delivering the opening speech at the forum, HCWA Secretary General Dr. Khanzad Ahmed stressed the need for developing a national multi-sectoral action plan to implement this UN Security Council Resolution on Women,

Peace and Security.

Dr. Ahmad focused in her speech on women's issues and the needs of the Kurdistan region.

Kurdistan Region Minister of Interior Reber Ahmed expressed the Kurdish government's readiness to support and empower women in all fields, especially women affected by war and violence. He also highlighted the importance of law enforcement and legislation to ensure gender equality all over the Iraq, and the Kurdistan region in particular, saying this can be achieved through a participatory process involving governmental, legislative, and civil entities.

Dr. Yusra Kareem Mohsen, Director-General of the Women's Empowerment Directorate, emphasized the willingness of the Iraq Federal Government to support the achievement of justice and equality for woman as well as to protect the Iraqi women from all kinds of violence and discrimination.

UN Women Representative in Iraq and Yemen Dina Zorba underlined the importance of the women, peace, and security agenda as an important key pillar of development and stability towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Additionally, she emphasized the important role carried out by women's civil society organizations in shaping the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325.

The Iraq NAP II is expected to be endorsed by December 2020. The plan highlights the need to create a coordination mechanism with the Kurdistan Region as well as international organization, particularly UN Women, throughout all stages, including planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.



UN Mine Action Service celebrates the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325



Baghdad, 1 November 2020 - UN Mine Action Service celebrates the 20th

anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. This decision is central to more effective and inclusive participation of women in Iraq's response to mine action.

What has the United Nations Mine Action Service in Iraq done to implement Security Council resolution 1325?

The United Nations Mine Action Service has provided explosive risk first responder training for Iraqi police officers and officers.

The United Nations Mine Action Service promoted the first explosive risk cleansing team of both sexes in

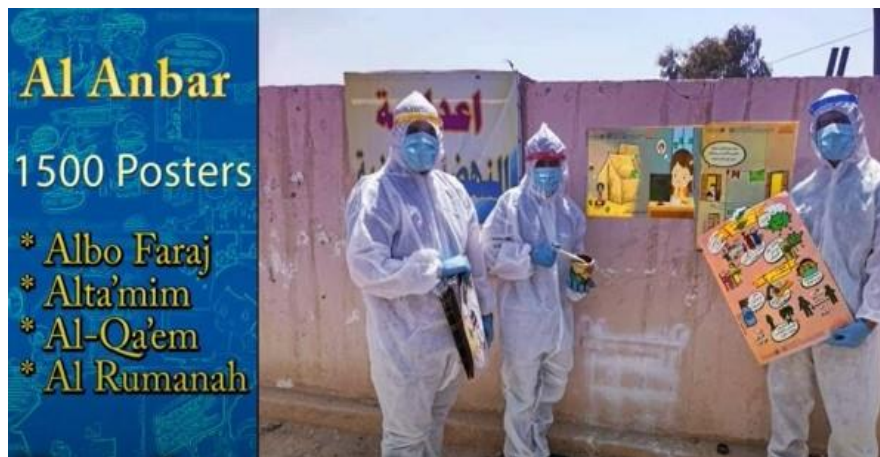
Sinjar and trained women to become responsible for risk awareness and community linkages.

In cooperation with the Government of Iraq and the Social Gender Unit of the National Mine Action Authority, the United Nations Mine Action Service in Iraq worked on strategic planning and technical support to empower women to assume leadership positions and mainstreaming The social type.

The United Nations Mine Action Service in Iraq, while effectively implementing mine action, has taken advantage of cleansing and raising awareness in its eyes, the special needs of women and girls.

Human Rights

UNAMI Human Rights Office's COVID-19 poster awareness campaign



Baghdad, 4 November 2020 - About 30,000 posters were handed out across Iraq's 18 governorates, in a matter of three weeks, thanks to the painstaking efforts of over 100 youth volunteers contributing to the fight against COVID-19. These posters, the work of talented Iraqi artists, inform about the health instructions and break the silence on the human rights impact of COVID-19 in an innovative and colourful display that appeals to the public.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic in Iraq, UNAMI's Human Rights Office (HRO) has partnered with more than 18 NGOs to raise awareness on the impact of the virus and advocate for compliance with health instructions. We continue to do this through an illustration-based campaign that is disseminated via social media, street

poster distribution and city murals.

A total of 13 images, by seven Iraqi cartoonists, including three women, aim to dispel rumours about the Coronavirus, raise awareness on the increase in domestic violence and limited access to education. In parallel, they inform about the health measures and our collective responsibility to contain the spread of COVID-19, and celebrate the courage and resilience of Iraqi healthcare workers.

In August, the al Namaa youth volunteers, including 27 women, from 18 NGOs distributed posters in over 90 remote areas and densely populated cities across Iraq. Posters inform on necessary individual prevention measures, urge people to speak up against misinformation and advocate to ensure access to education for all children.

In October, Imprint of Hope Organization completed 20 murals in 10 Baghdad neighbourhoods. The campaign transformed 560m of walls into colourful boards, informing on a range of issues, from how to take care of a loved one at home to highlighting the human rights consequences related to COVID-19. These murals covered walls on city squares and those of clinics, schools, universities and local administration buildings, as well as near traffic bridges and at bus stops. They illustrated the need to break the silence on domestic violence, inform about our collective responsibility to speak up against misinformation about the virus and ensure access to education for all children.

We will continue our efforts to encourage a public dialogue on the human rights consequences of the pandemic in the coming months and we will keep you updated on new cartoons and murals. Stay tuned.



UNAMI/Coalition for Just Reparations Conference: reparations framework backed by law covering all victims of conflict-related sexual violence the way forward to protect and strengthen survivors' rights

Baghdad, 9 December 2020 - A reparations framework that protects and strengthens the rights of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence must be established, backed by a law that places survivors at the heart of all efforts to address the consequences, a conference to strengthen awareness on the issue reaffirmed.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), jointly with the Coalition for Just Reparations comprising 27 Iraqi civil society organizations, convened the conference on 8 December to discuss concrete advocacy steps and strengthen awareness on reparations for survivors

of conflict-related sexual violence. The conference was organized in the wake of the Council of Representatives' second reading of the draft Yazidi Survivors Law on 11 November 2020.

Participants agreed that the current draft needs to be strengthened. The draft should include all conflict-related

sexual violence crimes, assist all survivors regardless of ethnicity, background and gender, and address the best interests of children born of Da'esh crimes.

In remarks at the conference, UN Deputy Special Representative for Iraq Ms. Alice Walpole echoed the call for the draft law to be expanded, to align it more closely with international human rights standards. She added that "a survivor-centred, rights-based response needs to place survivors at the heart of efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq, building their resilience and enshrining their experience in historical record."



UNAMI Chief HRO meets Iraqi Charge d'affaires in Geneva

Geneva, 19 November 2020 - UNAMI Human Rights Chief Danielle Bell met today with H.E. Dr. Abbas Kadhom Obaid Al Fatlawi, Chargé d'Affaires of Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. They discussed a number of human rights issues, including the Universal Periodic Review, freedom of expression, human rights and the administration of justice, human rights under COVID-19 and right to health as well as other relevant issues. Ms. Bell welcomed the continued engagement and constructive collaboration with the Iraqi mission on these issues.



Workshop on steps to strengthen an effective legal defense, evidentiary standards, judicial oversight of detention and reasoning of judgments

Baghdad, 23 November 2020 - Achieving the highest standards of justice in the Iraqi judicial system was the focus of a two-day online workshop facilitated by the UNAMI Human Rights Office. The event, which was completed today, brought together 16 Iraqi judges from different courts in Baghdad and international human rights and judicial experts, including from Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. During the event, participants inter alia exchanged views on steps to strengthen an effective legal defense, evidentiary standards, judicial oversight of detention and reasoning of judgments.

"A fair and just criminal justice system is a central element to the democratic way of life", said the Director of the UNAMI Human Rights Office, Ms. Danielle Bell. "We welcome the constructive

collaboration with the High Judicial Council on strengthening criminal justice procedures".

The workshop is the first in a series of discussions between judges and prosecutors and the UNAMI Human

Rights Office with a view to developing guidelines for the conduct of judicial investigations and trials in accordance with existing directives of the High Judicial Council and international standards.



UNAMI Human Rights Office collaborated with Iraqi artists to speak up against domestic violence in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, address gender-based stigma

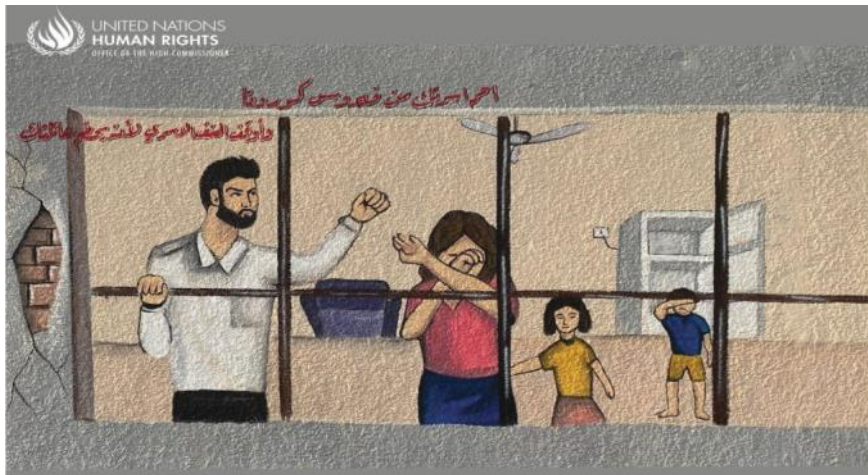
Baghdad, 25 November 2020 - 25 November kicks off 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, an annual campaign that runs until 10 December. To mark this year's campaign, UNAMI Human Rights

Office (UNAMI HRO) collaborated with Iraqi artists to speak up against domestic violence in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, address gender-based stigma, encourage women to seek medical treatment and praise

the courage of women healthcare workers. The images highlight gendered dimensions of COVID-19, aiming to provoke public dialogue about the consequences of gender-based violence and to reinforce our collective responsibility to end it.

The images have been shared widely through social media, posters in rural areas and large murals in busy urban areas throughout Iraq.

In the coming months, UNAMI HRO will continue to encourage dialogue on the human rights consequences of the pandemic, including the spike in violence against women and girls, while promoting the swift enactment of the draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law and other measures aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls in Iraq. Join the international campaign to eliminate violence against women: #OrangetheWorld #UnitedNationsHumanRights.



Discussion on cybercrime draft law at the CoR

Baghdad, 01 December 2020 - The first deputy speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, chaired a consultation today to discuss amendments to the draft cybercrimes law. Present at the discussion were members of parliament, representatives of a number of government ministries and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Speaking at the meeting, the chief of the UNAMI Human Rights Office, Ms. Danielle Bell, encouraged the Government of Iraq to ensure the proposed law is fully aligned with its obligations under international human rights law. She emphasized that human rights protection and freedom of expression apply equally to online and off-

line contexts, and expressed support for additional engagement with civil society,

human rights activists and journalists on this issue.



UNAMI Chief HRO meets the President of the Supreme Judicial Council

Baghdad, 7 December 2020 - The President of Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faiq Zidan, and Ms. Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI's Human Rights Office/Iraq Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), discussed in a meeting today collaborative efforts to promote awareness about human rights in the administration of justice.



UNAMI condemns violence in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, urges KR authorities to safeguard freedom of assembly and expression

Baghdad, 8 December 2020 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) condemns the acts of violence which accompanied public protests in Sulaymaniyah Governorate over recent days, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries and the destruction of property. The Mission extends its deep condolences to the

families of those who lost their lives and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

The right to peaceful protest must be protected and it is imperative that demonstrations remain peaceful. Media outlets should be allowed to freely report the news without intimidation or pressure. Investigations should

commence immediately to identify the perpetrators of the violence and for these persons to be held fully accountable.

The Mission calls for calm and urges the Kurdistan Regional authorities to safeguard the freedoms of assembly and expression.

UNAMI-facilitated workshop to strengthen capacity of Iraqi civil society organizations on protection from enforced disappearances



Baghdad, 9 December 2020 – A workshop for Iraqi Civil Society Organizations on promoting protection from enforced disappearances, facilitated by UNAMI Human Rights Office in collaboration with the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), provided a platform to strengthen the capacity of CSOs as participants shared knowledge, exchanged information and discussed tools and strategies to promote protection.

Key topics of discussion also included civil society engagement with the relevant UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedure Mandate Holders, the role of CSOs in responding to the needs the victims of enforced disappearances including the families of the disappeared, and the need for the government to enact legislation on the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance in line with its international human rights obligations. Among recommendations was a call on the Government of Iraq to fulfil its obligations on the protection from

enforced disappearance, finding the missing and ensuring accountability.

Participants in the three-day, online event included representatives of 24 Civil Society Organizations (CSO) – 16 men and eight women - from Anbar, Baghdad, Babel, Diyala, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. Expert guest speakers from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR) also made presentations during the event.

Speaking after the event, Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI's Human Rights Office and Iraq Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the workshop helps further strengthen the capacity of CSOs in conducting their work. "Addressing the longstanding issue of enforced disappearances in Iraq requires a coordinated a response by all stakeholders, and Iraqi civil society plays a key role in encouraging the Government of Iraq to take all necessary steps to put an end to enforced disappearance, provide redress to victims and hold the perpetrators to account."

“Nobody’s Listening”, a virtual reality experience

Baghdad, 9 December 2020 - “Nobody’s Listening” is a virtual reality experience and art exhibition aims to amplify the voices of survivors and affected communities seeking justice for, and recognition, of the Yazidi genocide carried out by ISIL. The programme praises the courage, determination, and agency of the survivors, while giving them the space to share their concerns with the world. On December 8 and 9, the VR experience was brought respectively to the Iraqi Parliament Building and to the College of Arts at the University of

Baghdad. Parliamentarians and other participants took in the film, that transports viewers to the sites that ISIL destroyed during the Sinjar Massacre, and an exhibition of pictures and paintings that capture the legacy of this event. Many emphasized the need to address the concerns highlighted by the artists and survivors featured in the exhibition.

The two events were organized by IOM Iraq with support of Yazda and were funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



Mosul Bridge decorated with Human Rights murals by Iraqi artists

Mosul, 10 December 2020 - The creativity of Iraq's youth was on display in Mosul city as murals were launched to celebrate Human Rights Day. Valentina from Ninewa submitted a powerful and evocative design which was transformed into a wall mural on Mosul Bridge by Imprint of Hope. Murals featuring design concepts by

Graffiti Hasan from Najaf, Aryan Abdel Rahman Mohamed from Halabja, and Hazhar Mohammad from Sulaymaniyah were also painted in Mosul. The murals reflect the theme of Human Rights Day 2020: ensuring human rights are central to the response to #COVID19 and recovery efforts.



Mosul rapper “The Golden Nenous” launches latest song “New World (COVID-19)” on Human Rights Day

Erbil, 10 December 2020 - Mosul rapper “The Golden Nenous” jumped at the chance to record a rap song about standing up for human rights during the global pandemic. The result is “New World (COVID-19)”, a song commissioned by UNAMI Human Rights Office and launched on UNAMI social media to mark Human Rights Day 2020. The Golden Nenous casts a lyrical spotlight on the importance of

protecting each other from COVID19, ensuring health care is provided to all Iraqis without discrimination, and enabling marginalized and vulnerable communities to participate in decision making on the response to COVID-19. This rap performance highlights the creative talents of Iraq's youth and the importance of putting human rights front and centre as Iraq responds to the pandemic.



Monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children discussions facilitated by Justice Rapid Response and UNAMI Human Rights Office and UNICEF

Baghdad, 10 December 2020 - International experts on child protection and Iraqi civil society organizations discussed at a UN-facilitated workshop the best ways to monitor and report on grave violations committed against children, sharing insights and challenges and establishing a peer network for further future collaboration.

The meeting of the Iraq Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Task Force (MRM TF) on Grave Violations against Children was the fourth since June, facilitated by UNAMI Human Rights Office and UNICEF, in collaboration with Justice Rapid Response (JRR).

At the concluding session today, held online due to COVID-19 restrictions, JRR expert Ms. Véronique Aubert, Lead on Children and Armed Conflict at Save the Children UK, and International Criminal Law and Gender Justice Adviser Danaé van der Straten Ponthoz made presentations on child protection.

Key topics discussed amongst the 13 men and 11 women participants from 10 different NGOs and UN Agencies, were ethical considerations, safety and security measures, interviewing children, remote monitoring tools, analyzing and evaluating information

as well as sexual violence. The discussions provoked an exchange of expertise and insights about challenges relating to planning documentation work and interviewing children and other witnesses while protecting the needs of the child survivors and their communities. It was also an opportunity to exchange views on recurrent challenges encountered when documenting grave violations against

children and ways to strengthen the existing network.

Participants decided to establish a peer network to serve as a continued exchange platform enabled by UNAMI HRO and UNICEF among the members of the MRM TF to further strengthen their child protection capacity and act as a quick and flexible exchange platform.



International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide commemorated in Baghdad

Baghdad, 11 December 2020 - Marking the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide, Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, addressed the workshop "Nobody's Listening" Virtual Reality in Genocide Education. The workshop was organized by the UNESCO Chair on Genocide Prevention at the College of Arts, University of Baghdad. In his address

Mr. Fontani reminded the participants of the powerful role of education in creating a culture of peace, promoting non-violent and universal values of justice, tolerance and respect for others to prevent violence in the future.

In a separate activity on the same occasion Mr. Fontani met with Ms. Vian Darwish, Yazidi Survivor Network member and Hala Safeel a Yazidi Survivor, members of YAZDA.



Preservation and protection of minority languages

Baghdad, 15 December 2020 - The preservation and protection of Iraq's minority languages, which are an enduring testimony of Iraq's rich cultural heritage, was the main topic at a workshop that brought together representatives of the country's diverse components, government and activists. Organized by JSSOR ("Bridge") Youth Organization and jointly facilitated with UNAMI Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO), the meeting comprised about 70 participants, including 28 women, from the Faili Kurd, Arman, Sabeen Mandeian, Zaradashti and Chaldean components. Also present were representatives of the Ministries of Education, Planning and Culture, Tourism and Heritage, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, civil society, as well as Members of Parliament

and with online participation by Dr. Fernand de Varennes, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority.

The workshop is the first of a series that aim to develop a strategy to be shared with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government on how to preserve and protect Iraq's rich and multilingual heritage.

The participants stressed the importance of language for cultural identity and strategies to save endangered languages which face extinction. UNAMI HRO Chief Danielle Bell said the "preservation of minority languages in law and practice will serve to protect Iraq's history and its rich cultural diversity." She noted that it is the shared responsibility of government, diverse society components and individuals to keep these languages

alive. UNAMI HRO will continue to support government efforts to preserve and protect Iraq's minority languages and meet its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.



Protecting minority rights and defending diversity in Kurdistan Region and Ninewa Plains



Erbil, 17 December 2020 - "Protecting Minority Rights and Defending Diversity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Ninewa Plains" was the theme of a workshop organized by JSSOR ("Bridge") Youth Organization and jointly facilitated with UNAMI Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO).

The event brought together over 40 participants, including 10 women, including representatives from Baha'i, Chaldean, Christians, Jewish, Kaka'i, Muslims, Roma, Sabeen Mandeans,

Turkmen, and Zaradashti. Also present were the KR Minister of Components Affairs, the Minister of Transport and Communications and representatives of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, two members of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, and representatives of the Independent Board of Human Rights and the Erbil Provincial Council. A similar JSSOR workshop to promote minority issues was held on the federal level in Baghdad earlier in December, and others are scheduled at the governorate level early next year.

The workshop in Erbil included discussion on measures to counter hate speech and the importance of women's participation in the preservation and protection of cultural heritage and language in the Kurdish Region and Ninewa Plains. Participants also highlighted the need for continued advocacy for inclusion of linguistic and religious minority groups in the public

education and school curriculums, and to continue efforts to raise awareness and foster a climate of tolerance and respect. Recommendations included the establishment of a dedicated office to document conflict-related sexual violence crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL against all minority groups to strengthen the awareness on the suffering and counter existing stigma within the communities, the enactment of laws criminalizing hate speech as well as constructing museums and language centres that promote the different components to reach a broader public.

Noel Kututwa of UNAMI HRO highlighted that "government, the different groups and individuals share a common responsibility to preserve and respect Iraq's diverse linguistic and cultural heritage". He added that UNAMI HRO will continue to support government efforts to strengthen minority rights in support of its legal obligations.

UNAMI delegation visited the Nasiriyah Central Prison

Baghdad, 22 December 2020 - On 21 and 22 December, a UNAMI delegation led by Ms Danielle Bell, Chief of Human Rights Office and Representative, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for Iraq, visited the Nasiriyah Central Prison, also known as 'Al Hoot'. It was the first time UNAMI was granted full access to the prison in Nasiriyah, and the visit was in line with UNAMI's mandate on the protection of human rights which allows access to monitor places of detention throughout Iraq.

During the visit, the prison director, Mr. Hussain Ahmed Bnayah Al-Sa'edy, provided showcased examples of sports, educational and vocational facilities. The delegation also met with a number of inmates. UNAMI expressed hope these services could be expanded and

be fully implemented for all detainees. UNAMI will continue its cooperation with the Ministry of Justice to address

issues of overcrowding, limited provision of health services and family communication.



UNAMI, IHCHR Discuss Human Rights Status in Thi-Qar

Baghdad, 27 December 2020 - A team from the UNAMI-Human Rights Section visited the IHCHR Office in Thi-Qar governorate and met with those in charge of it.

The Director of the Commission's Office provided an explanation of "the tasks they perform, their role in monitoring the humanitarian situation, the coordination with official institutions and civil society, as well as receiving and following up on citizens' complaints".

In turn, Ms. "Danielle Bell", Chief

Human Rights Section in the Mission and the accompanying delegation, appreciated the good reception and hospitality, the efforts made, and their monitoring of most of the issues and events that passed through the governorate, including the protests crisis, as well as the high level of coordination between the Mission and the Commission through continuous meetings and sharing of reports.

In conclusion, it was agreed to promote joint work and to hold joint workshops and training programs through the

Coordination Offices of UNAMI and the IHCHR-Office in the governorate.



16 Days of Activism

Results of a study entitled "The impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls in Iraq through the lens of women's civil society organization" launched on a webinar

Baghdad, 28 October 2020 - UN Women Iraq and Yemen Office organized today a webinar to launch the results of a study entitled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq through the Lens of Women's Civil Society Organization".

The webinar aimed to present findings of the study and to discuss the effect of COVID-19 across nine countries included in the survey, in addition to discussing measures that could mitigate the impact of the pandemic on women and girls.

UN Women Representative in Iraq and Yemen Ms. Dina Zorba lauded civil society organizations and women activists working in Iraq for their efforts to address rising levels of domestic violence as a result of COVID-19.

Manal Benkirane, a programme expert in UN Women Regional Office of Arab States, outlined the findings of the study and dwelt on the rising levels of violence over the past period.

Participants in the webinar tackled issues related to women residing in areas hosting displaced and refugee

people, and said that the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in these areas is greater due to their vulnerability.



UN in Iraq joint statement: “COVID-19 exacerbating gender-based violence in Iraq”

Baghdad 25 November 2020 - This year, the world marks the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which starts on November 25, in unprecedented circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic required governments to enact life-saving public health measures, including lockdowns, curfews and other restrictions on movement, to contain the spread of the virus. For women and girls, however, such measures can also be sources of increased risk of violence and loss of life.

Recent global and regional reports have shown an alarming increase in GBV cases during the pandemic, in particular domestic violence. Many of the measures necessary for controlling a viral outbreak have also significantly limited the ability of survivors to shield themselves from their abusers, or access support mechanisms.

Iraq is no exception. The GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) has recorded a marked rise in the number of reported incidents of violence in 2020. Domestic violence accounted for more than three-quarters of all reported GBV incidents. Given that Iraqi women and children - especially those with disabilities - were already exposed to high levels of risk of domestic violence pre-pandemic, these figures are only the tip of the iceberg, considering that a large portion of incidents are not reported.

While we commend its efforts to end gender-based violence, we call on the Government of Iraq to address the root causes of violence against women and children and to promote women's



leadership and participation in decision-making, including during times of humanitarian crisis and emergency. GBV prevention, risk mitigation and responsive actions should remain the most urgent priority, as many women and girls continue to be a target of violence and abuse suffering from the lack of legislation that can protect them and hold perpetrators accountable.

We urge the Government and Parliament of Iraq to end GBV, to hold perpetrators accountable, to create protective spaces and environments where survivors of GBV feel safe and empowered and can thrive.

We pledge to keep working together, as One UN, with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society, the international community and all

partners to ensure the protection of women and children across Iraq.

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq
 Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative, Iraq
 Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative, Iraq
 Zena Ali Ahmad, UNDP Resident Representative, Iraq
 Philippa Candler, UNHCR Representative, Iraq
 Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative, Iraq
 Abdirahman Meygag, WFP Representative, Iraq
 Danielle Bell, Chief, Human Rights Office, UNAMI, Iraq
 Mohammad Usman Akram, Director, UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman

A vocational training workshop benefiting 10 gender-based violence survivors held at Al Sulaimani

Sulaimani, 24 November 2020 - The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), in partnership with UN Women Iraq, organized a vocational training workshop benefiting 10 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors at Al Sulaymaniyah Women Shelter. The activity is a part of the project “Women, Peace and Security in the Arab States”, which is carried out by UN Women through funding by Finland. It aimed to provide the participating women and girls with vocational and business skills to help them launch their own income-generating projects.



A ceremony under the motto “Unite to Combat Violence Against Women” held at Basra

Basra, 25 November 2020 - As part of activities marking the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the Iraqi Al Firdaws Society organized today a ceremony under the motto “Unite to Combat Violence Against Women” at the Basra Governorate Conference Hall.

Advisor to Basra Governor for Organisations Affairs Dr. Hussein El-Aidani delivered the opening speech at the ceremony, emphasizing the role of local and international civil society organisations (CSOs) in upgrading social services offered to citizens.

Advisor to Parliament Speaker on Women’s Affairs Rehab Al Abbouda underlined the need to speed up the process of rectifying the anti-domestic violence law, now awaiting approval by the legislature.

The ceremony was attended by human rights activists, representatives of CSOs, media personnel and officials from the governorate.



An awareness workshop on violence against women organized in Kirkuk



Kirkuk, 1 December 2020 - The Women Leadership Institute organized today an awareness workshop on violence against women in its Safe Space centre in Kirkuk.

Held as part of activities marking the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the workshop was held within the framework of the “Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP) in Iraq”, implemented by UN Women through support by the Government of Japan.

A total of 12 women took part in the workshop, which aimed to raise the participants’ awareness of forms of violence against women (VAW), its causes and effects, the need to reject all

concerned authorities. VAW forms, means to fight it as well as to mitigate its effects, and the importance of reporting it to the

concerned authorities.

The workshop introduced participants to the concept of violence in general, outlining to them the scope of violence against women around the world, its short- and long-term effects in addition to familiarizing them with the aim of the 16 Days of Activism.

Participants had discussions about their personal experiences related to VAW, particularly marriage of minor girls and its effects on families and the society as a whole.

One of the participants, who got married at the age of 14, spoke about her experience which ended in a divorce following a period of suffering.



IOM Iraq is committed to fighting the culture that prevents women from speaking up for their rights

Kirkuk, 2 December 2020 - This November IOM Iraq's MHPSS team, in coordination with the Department of Youth and Sport in Kirkuk, organized an event to mark the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based-Violence campaign. The event started with a play that expressed the perseverance and determination of Iraqi women as they

fight the conditions that normalize violence against women. Success stories from Iraqi women were also shared during the event and trained IOM Iraq staff encouraged all women to report cases of violence against women and girls. This event was funded by the German Foreign Ministry.



UN KJSO shows support to the 16 Days of Activism against GBV

Kuwait, 3 December 2020 - The UN Kuwait Joint Support Office along with United Nations Iraq staff in Kuwait dressed in orange to show their support and solidarity to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.



Graffiti art promoting women empowerment painting on murals in five Iraqi cities continues

Baghdad, 7 December 2020 - As part of activities marking the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), a project to paint graffiti art on murals in five Iraqi cities continues. The project, carried out by UN Women and UNFPA in cooperation with Imprint of Hope organization, portrays positive images of women empowerment and the need to

eliminate GBV. The murals are being painted in Baghdad, Erbil, Basra, Mosul and Kirkuk. The 16 Days of Activism are launched every year on November 25, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and end on December 10, which is Human Rights Day.



The need to join efforts to combat violence against women highlighted at the activities in Duhok

Duhok, 9 December 2020 - Baghdad Women Association organized a host of activities to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in Sharia camp for displaced people, in Duhok Governorate, under the theme "Fund, Respond, Prevent and Collect." The activities were held within the framework of the "Women, Peace and Security in the Arab Countries" project, carried out in cooperation with UN Women through funding by Finland. Participants in the activities, organized in cooperation with the camp management and Harikar organization, included the director of the Sharia camp, representatives of government agencies and civil society organizations,

media personnel as well as displaced women and girls. The activity focused on raising the awareness of the 16 days campaign, the

need to join efforts to combat violence against women, achieve gender equality and ensure legal protection for women.



Access to justice for women victims of SGBV, and accountability for perpetrators of violence, remains a challenge



Erbil, 9 December 2020 - In response to the challenges hindering access of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) survivors to justice, the UN Women in Iraq, in coordination with Ministry of Justice, launched a Peer-to Peer Exchange with Regional and International Justice Sector Professionals in Erbil today. The workshop will last for four days with a participation of justice sector professionals from Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen, and Iraq.

In Iraq, GBV and discrimination against women continues to be a

longstanding and pervasive problem – including incidents of rape, honour killings, early marriage, kidnapping, abduction, domestic violence, trafficking and prostitution, tribal practices and religiously-motivated violence. During recent years, the number of cases is on the rise, exacerbated by ongoing conflict, economic crisis, mass displacement, and Covid-19 Pandemic.

However, access to justice for women, and accountability for perpetrators of violence, remains a challenge. Sexual violence during and in the wake of conflict continues to be dramatically

underreported because of the risks, threats and trauma faced by those who come forward. These risks affect not only survivors, but also witnesses, human rights defenders, service providers, journalists, justice officials and others who seek to ensure that sexual violence is not suffered in silence.

The UN Women works with justice professionals in areas with high rates of GBV to bolster the ability of these professionals to receive and adjudicate GBV-related cases. This support will target justice professionals nationwide where the justice system is both under stress and where large numbers of GBV cases are being reported either through national systems or to non-governmental partners

The main objective of the trainings is to increase the understanding, expertise, and sensitivity of the justice sector professionals towards GBV cases according to fair trials standards.

Activities will provide Iraq professionals with the opportunity to engage with peers to share best practices and lessons learned, and build a network that can serve as support and mentorship across the country, and with international experts.

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence marked in the Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 10 December 2020 - As part of activities marking the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the High Council of Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) organized in partnership with UN Women two workshops in Erbil in the period 6 to 9 December 2020.

A total of 58 people took part in the workshops, with 36 of them representing KRI government institutions and 22 representing civil society organizations operating in the

Kurdistan Region. Government participants represented gender units in all ministries as well as committees in charge of implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

In her opening speeches at the two workshops, Dr. Khanzad Ahmed, Secretary General of the High Council of Women Affairs, stressed the importance of developing a national multi-sectoral action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on

Women, Peace, and Security, with a focus on addressing women's issues and needs in the Kurdistan Region.

She also highlighted the important role played by all participants in the workshops to enrich the draft national plan with their inputs and recommendations that are in line with KRI needs, taking into consideration that the outcome of these workshops is considered as a step forward that will facilitate the endorsement and adoption of the proposed plan among the KRG relevant authorities.

Dr. Ahmad emphasised the important role carried out by women's civil society organizations in shaping the Iraq National Action Plan (INAP).

The main objective of the workshops was to review, enrich, and to localize the second INAP, covering the period 2021 to 2024.

The workshops were held as part of the activities of the project "Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities in Iraq", which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund (Madad).



Role of Community Policing (CP) across Iraq when it comes to response and prevention of GBV

Baghdad, 10 December 2020 - As the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence come to a close, IOM Iraq would like to recognize the ongoing role of Community Policing (CP) across Iraq when it comes to response and prevention.

In the first six months of 2020, over 1,000 domestic violence cases were recorded by the government, but many more victims keep silent out of fear. That's where Community Policing comes in.

This year, for example, a woman was hospitalized after being beaten and burned by her husband. After her family contacted the police, CP officers

visited her, investigated her situation, and offered moral and legal support. She initially refused to accuse her husband because she was afraid, but with the assistance of the CP officers, she registered a complaint. The man was soon arrested and will be tried in court.

IOM Iraq would also like to recognize the ongoing important work being done by Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in Iraq.

These groups help make sure cases of abuse and exploitation are identified and referred to victim support centres and services, including shelters that IOM Iraq has rehabilitated.



An arts exhibition and graduation ceremony of a literacy course for women commemorates 16 Days of Activism

Baghdad, 10 December 2020 - UNHCR partner SWEDO (The Swedish Development Aid Organization) ended the 16 Days of Activism with an arts exhibition and graduation ceremony of a literacy course for women, among other events.

Women received wool weaving training and crafted beautiful clothes which they will take for their children. Another major highlight is a training course by a very talented visual artist

to teach all interested children how to draw. The community came together and celebrated throughout these days in all of SWEDO's community centres on the occasion of the 16 days of Activism, over the last two weeks. SWEDO raised awareness among community members, based on subjects selected by them. Children played sports, were involved in drawing, painting, chess and table tennis inside the community centre.



Al-Amal Association organized a dialogue session to enhance the role of women MPs in building security and peace

Baghdad, 13 December 2020 - As part of the activities of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and under the auspices of Deputy Speaker of Parliament Dr. Bashir Haddad and in cooperation with the Parliamentary Women, Family and Childhood Committee, and support by UN Women in Iraq, the Iraqi Al-Amal Association organized a dialogue session to enhance the role of women MPs in building security and peace, under the theme "Peace begins in our homes", to highlight the violence that our women are exposed to and its negative impact on family stability, security and peace in society.

Deputy Speaker of Parliament Dr. Bashir Haddad in his opening remarks highlighted the need to legislate a national law to combat domestic violence, provided that this law meets international standards and social values, and takes into account specificity of the Iraqi society.

Maysoon Al-Saadi, head of the Women, Family and Childhood Committee, stressed on the importance of holding such sessions to talk and figure out key obstacles facing the legislation of the Protection Against Domestic Violence Law and the possibility of amending it according to the legislative and legal frameworks, appreciating the role of civil society organizations and all parties concerned with the advancement of social reality.

On the other hand, Intisar al-Jubouri, deputy head of the Women, Family and Childhood Committee briefed on the efforts of the Committee in supporting the legislations that promote peace and social cohesion, through participation in many seminars and discussion sessions in this regard, and stressed the role of Parliament in legislating the Domestic Violence Law, and accomplishing many draft laws related to the protection of the rights of women who are victims of any forms of

violence.

During the session, working papers were presented on the economic cost of domestic violence by Dr. Wafaa Al-Mahdawi, and the social effects of domestic violence (lessons learned), presented by the woman activist Alia Al-Ansari, Director of Bint Al-Rafidain Organization in Babel, while Dr. Ali Taher Al-Hammoud, Executive Director of Al-Bayan Center for Research and Planning, presented outcomes of polling Iraqi opinions on the law against domestic violence.



An activity in Al-Zawraa Park raises awareness on the Gender-Based Violence

Baghdad, 13 December 2020 - In conjunction with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the Public Aid Organization (PAO), Iraqi Al-Amal Association, with the support of the United Nations, organized a promotional activity in Al-Zawraa Park, attended by young men and women from the volunteer teams, human rights defenders, and the families touring the park. The event included distributing

brochures with an introduction to violence and its forms, the promotion of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and distributing targeted stories for children to build peace and promote coexistence.

Banners and slogans denouncing the various forms of violence were raised during a group stand by the participants in Al-Zawraa Park, calling for enacting the domestic violence law.



16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence marked by activities to benefit women survivors of GBV in Al Sulaimania

Sulaimania, 16 December 2020 - With support from UN Women, Asuda Organization carried a short-term project to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence to benefit women survivors of gender-based violence in Al Sulaimania Governorate, northeast Iraq.

The project aimed to shed light on the needs of neglected women in Al Sulaimania and to provide women staying at the government-operated shelter with essential items, including dignity kits. The women were also offered psychosocial services and group sessions to help them re-integrate back into the society in the future and carry on with their lives when they leave the shelter.

On December 2, 2020, as part of the project, Asuda organization implemented a one-day orientation

session on "smooth reintegration back into the community for survivors of GBV", which was facilitated by Mrs. Shilan Hama Noori, a women's rights activist who has been working with survivors of GBV for over 20 years, according to a statement by the organization.

The statement said the session aimed to boost the morale of women and girls residing inside the women's shelter in Sulaimania city, and guide them on means to start new lives or to reintegrate back into their old lives once their problems have been resolved and they become able to leave the women's shelter.

After the session, 35 women and girls in the shelter were provided with dignity packages comprising essential items such as bathrobes, towels, slippers, home wear, shampoo, Vaseline

and other items.

Similar dignity kits were also distributed to women inmates at Sulaimania women's prison on December 5, 2020. In addition, such kits were given to other beneficiaries of the shelter services as well as needy women.

In total, 100 dignity kits were distributed to beneficiaries, according to the statement.



Disability

Regular trainings for associations that support people with diverse disabilities supported by IOM Iraq

Baghdad, 28 October 2020 - The Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations (IADO), based in Baghdad, hosts regular trainings for associations that support people with diverse disabilities, with support from IOM Iraq.

The trainings aim to empower the organizations' working with people with disabilities and strengthen their role as representatives of people with disabilities. Recent trainings have focused on face to face sessions with the Deaf members of IADO. They also aim to develop the skills of all people with disabilities without discrimination, and to improve the inclusion of people with

diverse disabilities in events through the provision of reasonable accommodation like sign language.

The sessions are being conducted with a limited number of participants and in

the presence of a sign language interpreter.

These trainings are funded by Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



A disability-inclusive world during the COVID-19 Outbreak and beyond

Baghdad, 3 December 2020 – Today, on the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations in Iraq renews its commitment to achieving full and equal rights and participation in society for all children, women, and men with disabilities. In doing so, we pledge to continue working collectively towards a disability-inclusive and accessible world for all, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

To “leave no one behind” is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. In Iraq, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) aims to lead to full participation of and leadership by persons with disabilities in all areas of life and community, in line with the theme of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities: Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World.

Globally, more than one billion people experience some form of disability. Iraq is thought to have one of the world’s largest populations of persons with disabilities. In a country of almost 40 million, it is estimated that over four million people live with one or more disabilities, including those resulting from past or recent armed conflict. Among them are the most vulnerable refugees and displaced people.

The socio-economic consequences of the pandemic disproportionately impact upon the rights of persons with disabilities. Measures taken to safeguard families’ health, such as movement restrictions, restricted services and temporary closures of businesses have had side-effects such as disrupting equal access to information, health care, essential support and education. Households and individuals have also changed their behaviours, including persons with



disabilities and their carers who may be concerned about the increased risks associated with COVID-19. Persons with disabilities have been placed at even greater risk of isolation, stigmatization, poverty, loss of employment, abuse and mental ill-health.

The pandemic has shown that protection, response and recovery efforts can only be effective when everyone is equally valued and included. Critical and urgent action is required to ensure that persons with disabilities are consulted and included in public emergency planning, health response and recovery efforts.

“The commitment to protecting the dignity and human rights of all persons with disabilities, ensuring their lives and rights are appropriately protected during the COVID-19 pandemic is an investment in a common future and it is part of supporting Iraq’s future success,” said Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “There is still a long way to go and we stand ready to work together to ensure that everyone is included,

empowered and contributes to their community, so that every day will be a day for all.”

In support of the organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society and local authorities already doing important work on the ground, the UN in Iraq will work together to build a more inclusive, accessible, equitable, barrier-free and sustainable post COVID-19 society for persons with disabilities, and multiply our efforts in continuing to fully mainstream their rights.

While we appreciate the efforts made across the country for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, Iraqi authorities are encouraged to take all necessary measures to ensure the participation, safety and support of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, especially during the pandemic; and to prioritize addressing how poverty and deprivation disproportionately impact upon them.

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq
Zena Ali Ahmad, UNDP Resident Representative

Danielle Bell, OHCHR Representative/Chief, Human Rights Office UNAMI
Philippa Candler, UNHCR Representative

Dr. Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative

Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager

Abdirahman Meygag, WFP Representative

Dr. Adham Ismael Rashad Abdelmoneim, WHO Representative & Head of Mission

Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission

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IOM and UNDP in Iraq mark the International Day for Persons with Disabilities

Baghdad, 3 December 2020 - Today, IOM Iraq joins in the global call to start Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World. Persons with disabilities in Iraq have been disproportionately impacted by war, armed conflict, terrorism, violence and the economic hardship that have affected the country over many decades — the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the challenges they already faced. Currently, little is known about the issues affecting persons with disabilities in Iraq, which prevents any comprehensive response to their needs. There is no one better qualified to understand how persons with disabilities can be included in programming than persons with disabilities themselves, and their

representative organizations.

Last year on December 3, IOM Iraq launched its Disability Inclusion Strategy. Important work has been done, but a lot remains to be accomplished. In the year since, IOM has been proud to work with many local organizations of persons with



disabilities (OPDs) that support those with diverse disabilities across Iraq — through consulting with OPDs across 19 Governorates — as any effort towards disability inclusion is not complete without the input of persons with disabilities. “Nothing About Us Without Us”.

Across Iraq, UNDP in partnership with the Government of Iraq and the international community has rehabilitated more than 26,000 houses damaged by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

To date, more than 3,500 persons living with a disability have been supported through UNDP’s housing work.

Special modifications like ramps, seated toilets and handrails are included making day-to-day life much easier for residents.

WHO Iraq levels up the delivery of specialized health services for persons with disabilities in conflict-affected governorates

Baghdad, 3 December 2020 –Five years of conflict in Iraq has significantly affected more than 5 million Iraqis who, at one point in time, have left their areas of origin to safer shelters in different parts of the country. Approximately half a million civilians have incurred some level of injury while a few thousand lost one part or more of their bodies.

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO)- in collaboration with the national health authorities, partners, and donors- has widened the range of specialized health services for the people with physical disabilities to ensure their easy access to physiotherapy and psychosocial support programs, especially the Internally Displaced People (IDPs).

The endeavor also included motivating the inclusion, participation, and leadership of this vulnerable group in the 2030 Development Agenda.

“WHO, national counterparts and other partners are working hand in hand to ensure that people with disability all over Iraq enjoy fair and easy access to rehabilitation services, assistive technologies, and vocational training to improve their functioning and independence and foster their contribution to social life,” said Dr. Adham R. Ismail Abdel Moneim, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

In November 2019, WHO conducted an assessment in Talafar and Sinjar districts of Ninawa Governorate to investigate the flow of WHO supported physical rehabilitation and mental health services in the health facilities serving the communities there.

Hiba, Mohamed, and Hussain- three physical rehabilitation technicians delivering specialized services in the Rehabilitation Unit in Talafar General Hospital- receive a daily average of 20 patients. “Patients are referred to us by the specialized orthopedic surgeon in the hospital. All referrals require different physical therapies,” explained Mohamed. “We are very grateful to WHO for availing such services for Talafar people. Many here are returnees. We still need additional good equipment and physiotherapy machines to deliver better services,” said Mohamed.

Sinjar Hospital, on the other hand, has two big prefabs serving as the Physical Rehabilitation Unit. They were crowded with patients the day of the visit. “We request that WHO and its partners consider giving us a bigger space and better equipment to accommodate the

increasing demand for the rehabilitation services in Sinjar Hospital,” said Hassan Amer, a rehabilitation technician with over 15 years of service in Sinjar health facility.

In 2018, WHO received generous contributions from ECHO, USAID-OFDA, and the Italian Agency for Development Corporation to support the provision of physical and mental health rehabilitation services in Ninewa Governorate. The contribution enabled WHO to address major gaps with effective and sustainable solutions like supporting the rehabilitation centers and providing prosthetics and assistive devices to war-affected people.

“It is a collective responsibility to support the persons with disability and drive efforts to boost their inclusion and active participation in community activities to success,” concluded Dr. Abdel Moneim.



IADO renewed calls to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities and for their causes, so that they can exercise their rights more fully

Baghdad, 15 November 2020 - Following International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Iraqi Alliance for Disability Organizations (IADO) marked the occasion with their annual celebration in honor of the occasion. IADO renewed calls to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities and for their causes, so that they can exercise their rights more fully. A number of government officials attended the event in Baghdad, co-organized by IOM Iraq with support

from Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Hon. Adel Rikabi was in attendance; he highlighted the need for the government to support the rights and ambitions of people with disabilities, in accordance with law No.38 of 2013 on the care of persons with disabilities and special needs that the Iraqi Parliament has signed into effect.



Ministry of Health in Kurdistan, UNFPA open the disability-friendly reproductive health facilities in Erbil Governorate

Erbil, 16 December 2020 - The Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government, through the Directorate of Health in Erbil, with UNFPA and in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs opened today the first disability-friendly reproductive health facilities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The seven facilities in Erbil Governorate were fit-out with persons with disabilities-friendly furniture and equipment. The project funded by the Swedish and Australian Governments and amounting for US\$200,000 aims at facilitating access for women and girls with disabilities to quality reproductive health services. The primary health clinics are located in Soran, Khabat, Daratu, Mohammed Bajalan, Binaslaw and Koye districts in Erbil Governorate. UNFPA is also operating a disability-friendly reproductive health facility in Mosul, Nineveh Governorate.

The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ms Kwestan Mohammed, said: "We are happy to announce the launch of this important project with the Ministry of Health and UNFPA. This project provides free of charge

reproductive health services to 1000 women and girls with disability including pregnant women in seven primary healthcare clinics in Erbil Governorate. We hope to expand this project and reach all cities and districts in the Kurdistan Region to reach as many women and girls with disabilities as possible. I would also like to thank UNFPA and the Ministry of health for this initiative".

For his part, the Dr Dlovan Fatih stressed on the importance of this joint project with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in identifying and taking action to respond to the needs of women and girls with disabilities in selected areas, including referrals to the clinics and hospitals. The Director-General of the Directorate of Health in Erbil hoped for the partnership with UNFPA to continue to reach a larger number of women with disabilities in need of support.

UNFPA Deputy Representative, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni also spoke on the occasion and said: "Persons with disabilities are often invisible in society, and their rights for health, education and employment are not secured. The disability-friendly

reproductive health facilities, that UNFPA is supporting, are a first step towards the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and the facilitation of access to quality primary health services".

"UNFPA will continue to promote the rights of women and young people with disabilities to enjoy equal opportunities, live a life free of gender-based violence, and enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights," he added.

The disability-friendly reproductive health facilities project is part of the UNFPA WE DECIDE project that promotes the rights of women and young people with disabilities to enjoy equal opportunities, to live a life free of gender-based violence, and to enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights.



SRSG for Iraq met with the delegation of the Iraq Alliance for Disability

Baghdad, 27 December 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the delegation of the Iraq Alliance for Disability. Persons with disabilities in Iraq have been disproportionately impacted by war, armed conflict, terrorism, violence and the economic hardship that have affected the country

over many decades — including the COVID-19 pandemic that has compounded the challenges they already face. The SRSG discussed the concerns and needs of the people with disabilities in Iraq and ways in which the United Nations could support the activities of the Alliance and the people with disabilities in general.



UNESCO Iraq Office and Iraqi stakeholders celebrate International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists



Baghdad, 2 November 2020 - UNESCO Iraq office, in collaboration with the Iraqi Communication and Media Commission and the Ministry of Interior, organized an online discussion in Baghdad on the issue of impunity. The meeting shed light on the mechanisms of journalists' safety and prosecution to bring justice to murdered journalists and review the challenges and achievements of the fight against impunity in Iraq. UNESCO hosted the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI) event, which was attended by members of the Iraqi National Committee of Safety of

Journalists and Issue of Impunity.

The Ministry of Interior referred to the training sessions held by UNESCO in the last three months on the safety of journalists and issue of impunity and its impact over the investigation system and judiciary follow up.

The online meeting was chaired by Dhea Subhee, UNESCO CI Officer, who was supported by the Head of Information and Communication Monitoring Department Hussain Zamel, Special Investigation Unit of Journalists cases in MoI Raad Hamdan, Ministry of Justice Director-General Kamel Ameen, Representative of Iraqi Journalists Syndicate Hassan

Abodi and media outlets.

In the past fourteen years (2006-2019), close to 1,200 journalists around the world have been killed for reporting news and bringing information to the public. On average, this constitutes one death every four days. In nine out of ten cases the killers go unpunished. Impunity leads to more killings and is often a symptom of worsening conflict and the breakdown of law and judicial systems. UNESCO is concerned that impunity damages societies as a whole by covering up serious human rights abuses, corruption, and crime. Governments, civil society, the media, and everyone concerned to uphold the rule of law are being asked to join in the global efforts to end impunity.

It is in recognition of the far-reaching consequences of impunity, especially of crimes against journalists, that the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A / RES / 68/163 at its 68th session in 2013 which proclaimed 2 November as the 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' (IDEI). The Resolution urged Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity. The date was chosen in commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2 November 2013.

UNESCO and Ministry of Interior launched the package of the safety of journalists strategy to enhance relations amongst journalists and police officers

Baghdad, 11 December 2020 - With the generous support from the Government of the Netherlands, UNESCO succeeded in developing and printing out two books: "The Philosophy of the Relationship between the Police Officers and the Journalists", and "How to Protect Yourself from Blackmail", the first book contained instructions on how police officers should safely deal with journalists. The second book is about digital security for journalists and internet users based on police experiences out of thousand cases of cybercrime.

UNESCO in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) developed the media and communication strategy of the MoI related issues regarding the safety of journalists and officially launched this strategy packaged publications to be disseminated to police officers and the MoI directorates.

The first book offers essential tips and practical instructions for security forces on how to deal with journalists and what is freedom of expression, as constitutional rights in the country. The second book is about online threats for journalists and daily users, highlighting the guidelines on the techniques of safety from such threats.

The two books for journalists contained a wide range of essential information to enhance the safety of journalists and is useful for all those who work in news and information, mainly reporting from hostile environments, such as conflict zones, violent demonstrations, riots and terrorist attacks.

This edition resulted from long discussions between the police and journalists with support from UNESCO-CI staff and consultants. Since then, it has been designed and now the ministry will widely distribute

it to be the main document of dealing with journalists in a safe manner.

UNESCO continues its work within the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Aimed at creating a free and safe environment for journalist and media workers, the UN Plan of Action was adopted in April 2012 and confirmed by the UN General Assembly in November 2013.



Special Adviser Khan to UN Security Council: Momentum in investigations maintained through innovation, partnership with Iraq

Baghdad/New York, 10 December 2020 – Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC today presented his fifth report to the United Nations Security Council on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh / Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

SA Khan noted that despite the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID, UNITAD had been able to continue progress in investigations through the introduction of innovations in all aspects of work and the strengthening of partnerships with Iraqi authorities, survivor groups and religious authorities. Building on this progress, SA Khan confirmed that the first thematic case briefs developed by the Team were anticipated for completion in the first half of 2021.

Noting that during the reporting period the Team had also increased its lines of investigation into crimes committed against Christian, Kaka'i, Shabak, Shia Turkmen and Sunni communities in Iraq, SA Khan stated that "this diversification of our investigative work represents the realization of a promise I made to this Council at the outset of our work: That we will ensure there is no hierarchy of victim in our approach to the implementation of our mandate. All communities in Iraq suffered at the hands of ISIL and all must be engaged in efforts to hold them to account."

A trauma-informed approach to



investigative activities had been placed at the heart of the work of the Team during the reporting period. SA Khan noted that this had included the provision of psychosocial support to survivors and relatives during mass grave excavations recently conducted in Sinjar, the completion of assessments by UNITAD psychologists before all interviews conducted by the Team and the provision of support to Iraqi authorities in the establishment of a witness protection and support Unit.

The Team had also continued to harness innovative technological solutions in the delivery of its mandate, including the commencement of an initiative with Microsoft Cooperation in the development of an advanced evidence analysis platform. This initiative will allow the Team to leverage tools including facial detection and recognition; and automatic

detection and labelling of videos with graphic content.

SA Khan noted that the Team now looks forward to 2021 with optimism and with a clear framework for action following the re-development of its investigative strategy. "The unique partnership underpinning this mandate, that of independent investigations and close collaboration with national authorities, of international standards adapted to domestic contexts, is working. This innovative model for criminal accountability, developed by this Council three years ago, now provides an opportunity to instigate a paradigm shift in the investigation and prosecution of Da'esh crimes."

The full report of Special Adviser Khan to the Security Council can be accessed at www.unitad.un.org/content/resolutions

Germany supports UNITAD efforts to investigate financing of ISIL crimes

Baghdad, 11 December 2020 - With the support of Germany, UNITAD is undertaking investigations into the financial aspects of ISIL crimes and the financial mechanisms that either supported or enabled perpetrators to profit from ISIL's grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Accountability for the crimes committed by ISIL must include identifying and prosecuting those who enabled and profited from these crimes. This project, now in its second phase, will continue to support the work of UNITAD in investigating those who facilitated ISIL through financial support, and who may be culpable for international crimes. In support of this effort, UNITAD has established a dedicated team possessing specialized expertise and focus, in order to support

its ongoing investigations. This team is also working with Iraqi national authorities in order to strengthen their capacity to collect and analyze information relevant to the financing of ISIL crimes.

Through this project, UNITAD will continue to focus on how ISIL developed a complex and lucrative financial system to enable its activities and push revenue to its command structure and its fighters. ISIL profited from various illicit activities entrenched in systemic campaigns of terror and violence. It was able to produce vast revenues, often through coercion (extortion), intimidation, and through fostering an atmosphere of fear. It is therefore imperative to investigate the financing of ISIL's criminal activity; notably, the enslavement of minorities, the illegal

extraction of natural resources, and the proceeds derived from the plundering and pillaging of property and cultural heritage. The violence committed by ISIL generated an environment where significant illicit profits were made, used, and sent to offshore beneficiaries. Profit and financial gain inextricably ran in tandem to ISIL's ideology, and was a fundamental aspect of their common plan.

Thanks to the ongoing project Germany is funding, UNITAD has been able to strengthen its investigations by including the collection of evidence relating to the key financial facilitators that link to the international crimes committed by ISIL and the profits that were made during the peak of its violent campaign.

Government of Iraq resumes exhumation activities; opens two new Yazidi mass graves from ISIL



Sinjar, 28 October 2020 — After pausing activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Iraqi authorities have resumed the exhumations of mass graves, with support from the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) and the International Committee for Missing Persons (ICMP), and in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Yazda Organization.

On Saturday (24/10) Iraqi experts from the Mass Graves Directorate (MGD), under the leadership of Mr. Dia' Karim Sa'idi, and the Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD), under the leadership of Dr. Zeid Ali Abbas, started exhumations in the mass graves left by ISIL in Solagh and Kojo, Ninewa Governorate.

Representatives of the Government of Iraq, the National Coordination Committee (NCC), the Yazidi community, UNITAD, ICMP, and IOM were in attendance. Also attending were around 300 people, including many relatives of missing persons. The ceremony and operations were held under appropriate protection by the security forces.

During his speech at the exhumations ceremony Mr. Saad Abdali, Member of the Advisory Committee at the Prime Minister Office and Head of Coordination in the NCC, affirmed the Government of Iraq's dedication to honoring the victims and attending to this tragedy with the due respect and reverence it deserves. He announced that the Government of Iraq has made

future plans to open all mass graves and honor all the martyrs. He added: "as we stand today upon these pure bodies, and in front of the families of the victims, we bow in respect and honor of your gracious sacrifices, full of hope that this cruel experience becomes a starting point for us to come together to build our homeland."

In his speech, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Karim A. A. Khan QC indicated that: "the exhumations attest to the close cooperation between the Government of Iraq and all partners, including the United Nations organizations." He stressed the international community's commitment to achieve justice for the victims of ISIL and their families. He also highlighted the important work that MGD and MLD are doing for the families and the accountability they call for, reaffirming that UNITAD — with international grants from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, the European Union and others — will continue to support the capacity building of national Iraqi forensic teams including the investigations and exhumation operations they conduct.

ICMP Iraq Program Deputy Head Fawaz Abdulabbas said:

"All of us here hope that the work that begins today will ease the pain for some of the many Yazidi families with missing relatives by unearthing the remains of their loved ones. ICMP supports Iraq's efforts to secure the rights of Yazidi victims of Da'esh crimes through proper investigations and DNA -based identifications. These

efforts are important, not only to the many families who suffer every day because relatives are missing, but to society as a whole. Accounting for the missing is an investment in peace and stability."

DNA Sampling

The Iraqi authorities are reaching out to families in the Sinjar area, inviting those with missing relatives to consider offering blood samples. DNA from these blood samples will be compared to DNA extracted from human remains found in the mass graves. Authorities will then use these results to determine kinship between victims found in the graves and surviving families. Blood samples are to be collected this week in the Kojo Primary School hall and later in Sinjar Hospital.

Psychosocial Support

Exhumations are painful processes that are likely to trigger a wide range of difficult emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness or fear. In anticipation of the emotional burden, UNITAD's psychology team assisted with the coordination of psychosocial support to families and the communities through direct involvement of Yazda and IOM. IOM's MHPSS team arranged discussion groups with the community members to ascertain their expectations and needs prior to the exhumation day. IOM also conducted a training on psychological first aid to prepare the staff who were deployed to provide support on the day. Individual mental health and psychosocial support was provided by over 20 of Yazda and IOM's psychologists and psychosocial workers on site, to help alleviate the distress of the bereaved families. The MHPSS teams were deployed to the area throughout the day to provide emotional and practical support to bereaved families.

The Iraqi teams of experts from MDG and MLD will continue to work in Solagh and Kojo mass graves in the coming weeks until the conclusion of the first stages of exhumations. The remains will be transported to specialized labs in Baghdad to be preserved and accurately analyzed before identifying the victims. The remains of the victims will then be returned to their families, giving them the opportunity to lay them to rest appropriately and according to traditions. ICMP and UNITAD work with the MGD and MLD to ensure the process is conducted according to international standards.



Baghdad, 27 October 2020 - UNITAD Psychosocial Support experts conducted a virtual training for NGO partners Turkmen Rescue Organization, providing them with necessary skills and knowledge to strengthen support for ISIL survivors without causing further harm. The training raised awareness of social media communication threats, provided guidance for managing physical and psychological safety of its users, and covered the importance of building and strengthening peer support groups and improving physical and mental wellbeing through stress management



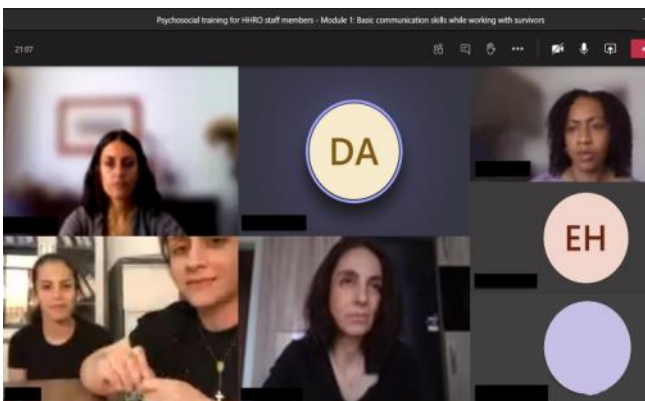
Baghdad, 28 October 2020 - UNITAD delighted to engage today with over 50 Iraqi and international NGOs in the first thematic roundtable of the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue forum. Participants addressed how UNITAD can partner with NGOs to empower survivors and witnesses to come forward with their accounts. Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC underlined that NGOs are crucial partners in ensuring that the voices of those impacted by ISIL crimes are heard. Discussions focused on ensuring a survivor-centered approach and challenges in communicating effectively with impacted communities regarding accountability processes.



Baghdad, 29 October 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was pleased today to speak with members of the Iranian Center for International Criminal Law as part of their webinar “ISIL Accountability for International Crimes: The Role of UNITAD”, providing an overview of the Investigative Team’s work before answering questions from participants.



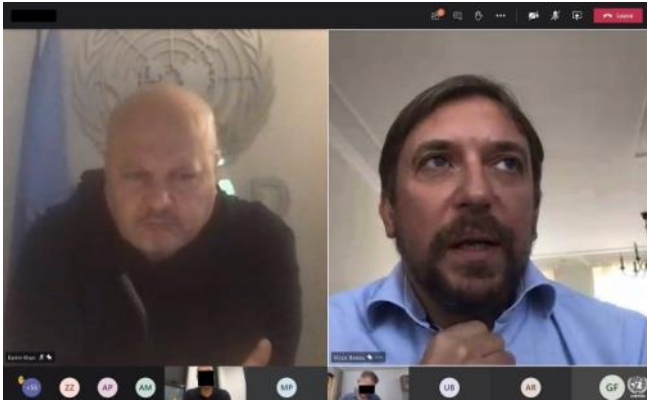
Baghdad, 1 November 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC visited the Parliament of Iraq with his team today. Fruitful discussions held with Deputy Speaker Mr. Hassan al-Kaabi and Legal Committee MPs ahead of the second reading on draft amendment to allow prosecution of ISIL members for international crimes in Iraqi courts.



Baghdad, 2 November 2020 - Experts from UNITAD’s Witness Protection and Support Unit conducted a two-part virtual training for Hammurabi Human Rights Organization’s psycho-social workers supporting victims and survivors of ISIL crimes of Christian faith and their families who have returned after facing persecution. The training focused on developing core communication skills and setting up support groups. It allowed participants to share their experiences in working with traumatized victims and enhance their knowledge to provide tailored psycho-social assistance without causing further harm.



Baghdad, 3 November 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC had important discussions today with the President of the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faiq Zidan, on legal amendments now pending before the Parliament of Iraq to allow prosecution of ISIL members for international crimes, and on ongoing judicial cooperation issues.



Baghdad, 04 November 2020 - UNITAD was delighted to welcome Mr. Victor Baiesu, Legal Officer in the Chambers of the Special Tribunal of Lebanon (STL), to present on the use of telecommunications evidence and its value to international criminal investigations. The challenge of anomalies in data was discussed, as well as lessons learned for UNITAD to draw upon in its work.



Baghdad, 4 November 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with the Netherlands Ambassador to Iraq, Michel Rentenaar. They discussed continued Dutch support to UNITAD for 2021. The Netherlands supports witness and victim protection, as well as support and outreach to Yazidi communities. Accountability for ISIS crimes in Iraq remains key priority for the Netherlands and UNITAD.



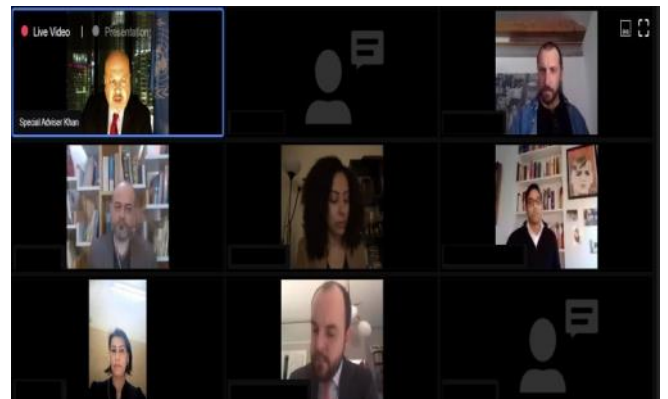
Baghdad, 11 November 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with members of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights today. They agreed UNITAD would help enhance IHCHR capacity to archive and digitize evidence held related to ISIL crimes. Next steps for improving information sharing to UNITAD were also agreed upon.



Baghdad, 24 November 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with H.E. Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi today. They discussed UNITAD's progress, including its support to the government on mass grave exhumations; archiving/digitization of ISIL related evidence; and capacity building of the judiciary to prosecute ISIL perpetrators of international crimes. Prime Minister Kadhimi expressed his support for UNITAD's work and the need to ensure justice for all Iraqis. He also stressed the importance of passing a law to prosecute ISIL members for international crimes to strengthen national unity and prevent the recurrence of such atrocities.



Baghdad, 3 December 2020 - UNITAD's psychologists provided a training workshop to participants from the Medico-Legal Directorate, Al Andalus Hospital, Al Risafa Health Directorate and Al Hakim Foundation. The workshop, held in cooperation with the National Coordination Committee, focused on special measures to protect the psychological and physical well-being of vulnerable witnesses, and on ways to strengthen national systems in witness protection.



Baghdad, 15 December 2020 - UNITAD was today delighted to welcome both Iraqi and International NGOs to the first biannual plenary roundtable of the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum. Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC underlined that this meeting formed part of an ongoing commitment to strengthen UNITAD's engagement with the NGO community.

Iraqi officials meet with Yazidi community representatives and NGOs

Baghdad, 03 December 2020 - Iraqi officials from Baghdad met with Yazidi community representative and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in a community outreach event facilitated by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD).

The purpose of this event was to allow members of the Yazidi community the opportunity to engage and inform the planning process surrounding the return of the identified Yazidi remains exhumed during mass grave excavations that took place in Kojo during 2019.

Representatives from the Iraqi Government's National Coordination Committee (NCC), the Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD) and Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) were joined by members of UNITAD, International Committee for Missing Persons (ICMP) and Sheikh Talib Naif Jasim on behalf of Sheikh Naif Jasim Qasim to address concerns and solicit inputs from community members on the return of remains of those identified to Kojo.

The delegation underscored the gravity of the atrocities committed by Da'esh against the Yazidi community, underlining the importance of this



engagement to ensure the concerns of those relatives are considered in the planning process.

In answering questions raised by community and NGO representatives, the delegates clarified details for current and future operations concerning excavations. This also included the process of excavations, analysis, DNA matching and return of identified remains to their families. They emphasized the importance of returning the remains of those identified to their loved ones for burial, in accordance with their religious beliefs and cultural practices.

During the event, UNITAD's clinical psychologist highlighted the importance of providing the necessary emotional assistance as the return of identified remains to Kojo is likely to carry a heavy emotional toll on affected families. She highlighted that an inter-agency coordination response will be planned to ensure adequate psychosocial support will be available on-site to families.

The delegation underlined the effectiveness of community engagement, indicating that proper coordination and communication will continue concerning upcoming events.

UNITAD joins marking of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime

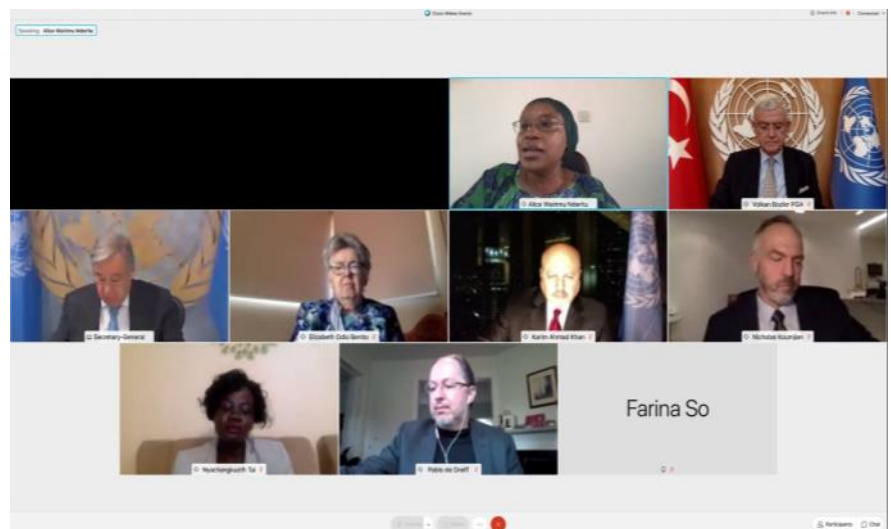
Baghdad, 9 December 2020 – Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC attended today the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect's event to mark the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime.

"The unique strength of UNITAD is the unity of Iraq and the international community in ensuring that Daesh's crimes in Iraq are investigated, prosecuted and punished as international crimes, including genocide" - Special Adviser Khan said during the event.

He stressed the importance of integrating victims into the work of UNITAD: "We engage and empower the most vulnerable groups by adapting our

own processes to the needs and experiences of witnesses and survivors,

rather than requiring them to adapt to a standard approach".



Denmark supports UNITAD investigating sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children

Baghdad, 11 December 2020 – Denmark has signed an agreement to provide financial support to the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD).

The support, which amounts to DKK 6 Million (approx. USD 900.000), is allocated to investigations carried out by UNITAD's Gender-Based Crimes and Children Unit and is co-managed by UNITAD's Information Systems Unit (ISU). ISU's work is vital in the collection, storage, and processing of evidentiary material related to gender-based crimes committed by ISIL, and crimes against children. With the help of the Danish contribution, both units will be able to employ technological solutions to investigations across three thematic areas: crimes affecting children; sexual slavery; and crimes against the LGBTIQI community. The overall aim is to enhance the collection,

storage, and processing of evidentiary materials pertaining to criminal investigations of crimes ISIL committed in Iraq.

In connection with the support, the Danish Minister for Defence, Trine Bramsen, stated "Women and children are among those, who suffered the worst during ISIL's reign of terror. By holding ISIL accountable for their heinous crimes, UNITAD supports the Iraqi efforts to ensure the enduring defeat of the terrorist organization. Denmark is proud to be contributing to this effort."

Women from minority groups in Iraq were specifically targeted for sexual and gender-based crimes by ISIL, which may fall within the spectrum of international crimes including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. This includes rape, forced marriage, sexual enslavement, abduction, human trafficking, torture,

and the violent separation of women, children, and men.

Pursuant to UNITAD's mandate, the Team will utilize the funding to ensure its investigations are conducted in accordance with the highest international standards for documenting and preserving evidence. Denmark is also providing financial support to UNITAD aimed at strengthening the capacity of Iraqi courts, the judicial system and forensic capacity.



Humanitarian

The United Nations supports IDP returns that are safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable

Baghdad, 30 October 2020 – The Office the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq today issued the following statement: "The Government of Iraq has announced its intention to close multiple camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq by the end of 2020. Several camp closures and consolidations have taken place within the last several days, and the

Government has signaled that more should be expected.

These decisions are taken independently of the United Nations, which is not involved in governmental determinations regarding the status of IDP camps. Primary responsibility for the protection and welfare of IDPs rests with national governments and local authorities.

The United Nations supports IDP returns that are safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable. The UN

maintains its mandate to coordinate with the Government on issues of humanitarian assistance and is working to ensure that IDPs who have left camps and are returning home have access to necessary support while en route and upon arrival.

The United Nations is tracking developments closely and has been in constant communication with the Government of Iraq on planning for longer term durable solutions for all vulnerable IDPs in Iraq."

IOM Representative meets the Minister of Migration and Displacement

Baghdad, 9 November 2020 - IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Mr. Gerard Waite, met today with the Minister of Planning, Mr. Khaled Battal, and the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Jabro, at the Ministry of Planning headquarters in Baghdad.

They discussed challenges related to displacement and return, common objectives, and supporting a joint

response plan through periodic technical meetings. IOM will continue supporting the two ministries' efforts to provide assistance to IDPs and returnees, and to restore stability to liberated governorates — through program implementation and supporting durable solutions.



UNHCR ramps up support to Iraqi returnees amid large-scale closure of IDP camps

Geneva, 13 November 2020 - This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at yesterday’s press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is boosting support to internally displaced Iraqis returning to their towns and villages in an effort to mitigate some of the adverse effects of the government-led large-scale camp closures so near to the onset of winter.

Following the government’s announcement to accelerate solutions for over 250,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), the authorities initiated the closure of 10 sites in Baghdad, Kerbala, Diyala, Anbar, Ninewa and Kirkuk governorates since 18 October. The Government has signaled that more camp closures should be expected before the end of 2020.

So far, around 48,000 IDPs have been informed that the camps where they shelter will be closed before the end of this month. Government information about camp closures and timelines have changed rapidly, creating uncertainty for many IDP families. Many have objected to leaving camps now over concerns about conditions and destruction, tensions and insecurity in the areas of return. Some IDPs say they were given only two-days’ notice to leave their shelters.

Some IDPs have moved from the camps to rented accommodation, but fear eviction given their limited resources. Others,



citing lack of information about alternatives and unable to return to their homes, have joined crowded accommodation with friends and family.

We have raised our concerns with the Government, stressing that some of the closures have been conducted without adequate notice and consultations with IDP representatives and aid agencies working in the camps. We are particularly worried about IDPs who say they are unable to return in the absence of organized dialogue with communities and local authorities in the return areas in central and western Iraq which were heavily affected by the years of terror and fighting.

UNHCR also recognises that efforts have been made to find solutions for some IDPs who could not, or did not want, to return to places of origin.

Together with partners, we are helping the authorities to inform IDP families about the timeline of closures, options for those unable to return and assistance that will be provided upon return. UNHCR will release seasonal cash assistance to help families meet their immediate needs in the coming winter months and provide legal assistance to families to obtain civil and property documentation. We are also working with partners to rehabilitate infrastructure in areas of return.

UNHCR remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq to find solutions for IDPs. But we stress the need for a phased approach that addresses much-needed reconciliation, reconstruction and restoration of livelihoods in areas of return, as well as integration and settlement options for families unable to return to their homes.

DSRSG/HC/RC Vojáčková-Sollorano discuss humanitarian issues with Minister Faik Jabro

Baghdad, 16 November 2020 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by representatives from UNHCR, UNDP, IOM, and OCHA, met today with the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Ivan Faik Jabro. They discussed the humanitarian situation in the country and the ongoing Government initiative to close and consolidate camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

DSRSG/RC/HC Vojáčková-Sollorano and Minister Jabro agreed to coordinate on timelines and workplans regarding issues of mutual concern, and to remain in frequent contact with each other moving forward.

DSRSG/RC/HC Vojáčková-Sollorano reiterated that the United Nations supports IDP returns that are safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable. The UN maintains its mandate to coordinate with the Government on issues of humanitarian assistance and

is urging the Government to ensure that IDPs who have left camps and are returning home have access to necessary support while en route and upon arrival.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.



Community activities offered by NGOs have had a positive impact on Tel Afar society



Baghdad, 16 November 2020 – IOM supported activities, funded by the Government of Japan, were organized by local civil society organizations (CSOs) that bring together both genders and people from different backgrounds, coupled with the fact that during displacement people were exposed to other communities' cultures, have had a positive impact on Tel Afar

society, but as people have suffered a lot since 2014 and a lot more needs to be done. Local CSOs should be heavy involved in this because they are from the community.

"When ISIL attacked Tel Afar, we fled to Turkey. When we returned to Telafar in 2018, I felt really down. I graduated in 2009 and was never able to get a teaching job; after 2014 the

ISIL conflict made it even worse.

When we returned from displacement, Tel Afar was empty of residents. Days and nights would pass, and I could hardly hear the sounds of anything I was used to hearing before the conflict; children playing outside; youngsters playing football; busy streets. I was totally devastated psychologically.

Later I learned about community activities offered by NGOs. I decided to go out and participate in educational courses to try and change my mood. I participated in language courses and book clubs - these were organized by IOM. Through these activities I discovered many new books; I had always had a passion for reading. Participating in such activities helped me build self-confidence. I became more confident to speak in the presence of men — it was the first time in my life that I could discuss diverse subjects and books in a mixed group that included men as well," said Thekra who participated at Tel Afar civil society organization (CSO) activities supported by IOM.

With continued support from the United States, WFP assists thousands of vulnerable families in Iraq

Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has gladly received a generous contribution of US\$16.8 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA). It will directly support food assistance for displaced and refugee families, and the digitalisation of the national Public Distribution System (PDS) for food rations.

The latest contribution makes USAID WFP's most vital donor in 2020, supporting up to 280,000 displaced Iraqis and 76,000 Syrian refugees through cash and voucher assistance that meets their immediate food needs. This fresh support comes at a time when COVID-19 and the associated disruption to food access particularly exposes some of Iraq's most vulnerable families.

"The United States continues its support of WFP to provide life-saving assistance to crisis-affected people in Iraq, including internally displaced people and refugees," said USAID Mission Director John Cardenas. "It helps families get through this difficult time of increased need caused by COVID-19."

Meanwhile, the digitalisation of the PDS together with the Ministry of Trade is aimed at a more efficient food ration system, helping ensure the right food reaches the right people at the right time. The recent introduction of the 'Tamwini' ('My Food Ration') smartphone app allows families to update data and upload supporting documents from home, limiting unnecessary movement to PDS offices. In the longer term the 'ePDS' and Tamwini aim to cover all 8 million households in Iraq.

"We are thankful to the people and government of the United States for their support to help families in Iraq put food on the table," said WFP

Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. "During the pandemic, many people have resorted to negative coping mechanisms – such as eating less, or borrowing food or funds. Such support from USAID/BHA is helping families to make ends meet at this time."

WFP's latest 'Hunger Snapshot' analysis indicates that since last week there has been an increase of over 75,000 households resorting to negative coping strategies, and that 2.7 million people in Iraq do not have enough food to eat. WFP urgently requires an additional US\$20.7 million to continue providing life-saving food assistance to support families over the next six months.



IOM Iraq will facilitate the voluntary return of 37 displaced households to their area of origin Ninewa Governorate



Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - IOM Iraq, with support from U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, will facilitate the voluntary return of 37 displaced households from an out-of-camp setting in Mosul to their area of

origin in Mahalabia sub-district, Ninewa Governorate. As part of the preparations, IOM Iraq staff met with the heads of the households to discuss the return process and the assistance that will be provided, which includes return grants, housing reconstruction

grants and post-return reintegration support.

“We are a family of ten living in an unfinished structure in Mosul. Our house was leveled to the ground during the conflict with ISIL and we have since been displaced and unable to return,” said Yunus Khalil, one of the heads household. “Thanks to this initiative, it feels like being alive again after hardship and I cannot wait to go back and reconstruct my house with [IOM’s] support.”

IOM Iraq supports IDP returns that are safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable, and also supports alternative durable solutions including local integration and resettlement. IOM has been involved in facilitated return movements of IDPs in recent months, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq, Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) and humanitarian partners.

RC/HC Vojáčková-Sollorano: “I am gravely concerned about the thousands of civilians who have been moved from camps for Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq”



Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, issued the following statement on IDP camp closures in Iraq:

“I am gravely concerned about the thousands of civilians who have been moved from camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq in the last six weeks and have not yet found new homes. The Government of Iraq has closed or consolidated 11 such camps and reclassified two as informal

sites since mid-October, affecting more than 27,000 people. An estimated 78 per cent of those are women and children who were already vulnerable. Their wellbeing is of particular concern in light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and the onset of winter.

This is not about camp closures. It is about what will happen to those Iraqis, their safety, their wellbeing and their future. Two-thirds of affected people have reached their district of origin, but many are not in their traditional homes, according to United Nations data. About 30 per cent of those returnees do not have safe or dignified housing and remain highly vulnerable. The other one-third of people affected have been unable to return to their places of origin. Social tensions and insecurity, the presence of unexploded ordnances and explosive remnants of war, and the lack of civil documentation, housing, services, cash assistance and livelihood opportunities remain barriers to their return.

I am also concerned by indications that more Iraqi families could face similar situations if the remaining five camps administered by the Government of Iraq are closed before the end of the year. The United Nations shares the Government’s goal of ending the displacement crisis in Iraq but

reiterates that the return of internally displaced people needs to be voluntary, safe, dignified, and informed, with conditions in place in advance in their areas of origin to enable reintegration and ensure sustainable solutions. The United Nations stands by its commitment to support the Government of Iraq in facilitating and achieving longer term durable solutions for all vulnerable displaced and returnees in Iraq, including by supporting social cohesion measures.

Vulnerable displaced populations need more active support to rebuild their lives in dignity and in accordance with the fundamental standards of human rights. They need a suitable environment for a sustainable return and structured support programmes towards durable solutions. It is essential to continue the efforts to build the resilience of communities hosting IDPs as well as those receiving returnees. Supporting these populations contribute to Iraq’s future stability and success. Together with our national and international humanitarian partners, we are closely following the matter, will continue to support and stand ready to provide further assistance when required, in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Ministry of Interior - KRG to support refugees and displaced people in camps through partnership with UNHCR



Erbil, 2 December 2020 – Today, UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) signed a partnership agreement. The agreement will facilitate services for over 94,574 refugees and 102,860 internally displaced persons (IDP) in 35 camps in

Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Under this partnership, JCCC will administer Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), maintenance of camp infrastructure, and water, sanitation and hygiene services to IDPs and Syrian refugees living in camps in KRI.

“The signing of this agreement symbolizes a long-standing partnership with MoI and JCCC in KRI. It is key to providing services and support to many vulnerable people hosted by the Government of KR, whose lives have been impacted by displacement. The close working relationship between our institutions will also pave the way to seeking durable solutions for refugees and other displaced people in Iraq”, said Philippa Candler Representative UNHCR, Iraq.

“We are proud of this partnership and greatly value the continued assistance of the UNHCR, this assistance will strengthen our capabilities to not only continue providing basic civic services to the Refugees and IDPs in the camps, but it also will enable our institutions to enhance the services to these very vulnerable people until the conditions are allowing them to return to their place of origin”, said H.E. Rebar Ahmed, KRG’s Minister of Interior.

Kingdom of Belgium helps UNHCR support vulnerable Syrian refugees in Iraq



Baghdad, 8 December 2020 - UNHCR welcomes the generous contribution of the Kingdom of Belgium of 1 million EUR toward UNHCR cash assistance for vulnerable Syrian refugees in Iraq.

This assistance will help relieve the dire conditions of vulnerable Syrian refugee families in Iraq. The generous contribution highlights the longstanding engagement and importance the Kingdom of Belgium has placed in addressing the humanitarian needs of displaced and conflict-affected communities in Iraq, thereby alleviating suffering and

working together towards long-term and sustainable solutions.

Providing refugees with cash enables them to fulfil their needs in a dignified manner and contributes to the local economy. UNHCR uses cash-based intervention to provide protection, assistance and services to the most vulnerable. Cash assistance helps refugees meet a variety of needs, including access to food, water, healthcare, shelter, that allow them to build and support livelihoods.

The year 2020 has been challenging across the globe. However, the effects of the pandemic on those having faced

years of conflict and a dire economic downturn, such as Syrian refugees in Iraq, have been disproportionately harsh. It is momentous that even during these difficult times, the Kingdom of Belgium chose to manifest once again its solidarity and support to Syrian refugees.

Mr. Filip Vanden Bulcke, the Ambassador of Belgium to Jordan and Iraq, said that “Syrian refugees in Iraq have been very vulnerable since they arrived there, but the Covid-19 pandemic has made the already dire conditions they live in significantly worse. This is why Belgium has decided to extend its financial support to UNHCR’s cash assistance program. We are very impressed with UNHCR’s efforts in reaching the most vulnerable, and cash assistance has proven to be very effective in helping refugees fulfill their basic needs.”

“Some refugee families are really suffering as a result of loss of livelihood opportunities due to the pandemic. Being able to provide cash assistance can help them get on their feet again. UNHCR really appreciates the support of donors like the Kingdom of Belgium, who make this possible,” said Philippa Candler, UNHCR Representative in Iraq.

Thousands of internally displaced Iraqis obtain civil documentation thanks to EU support



Baghdad, 9 December 2020 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has provided legal assistance to over 64,400 people from January 2019 to June 2020, including legal counselling and representation before administrative and judicial instances, thanks to the support of donors such as the European Union (EU).

In 2019 and 2020, the EU has donated up to EUR 6 million in humanitarian aid for internally displaced people (IDP) in Iraq to the UNHCR. With this support, UNHCR continues to deliver vital assistance to thousands of IDPs through the provision of critical protection services, including legal assistance, access to civil documentation, and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) support. Furthermore, in the current COVID-19 context, the EU's humanitarian support has also

contributed to UNHCR's contingency plan in response to the pandemic.

"It is a priority for the EU to ensure displaced Iraqi families remain safe and sheltered in the midst of a pandemic, especially with camps closing at the onset of winter. Working in partnership with UNHCR, we are committed to do everything we can so that people leaving the camps are protected, with civil documentation and access to services, and those who stay continue to benefit from basic services," said Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management. During the same period, over 38,000 people obtained civil documents through the "Ad Hoc Committee on Civil Documentation" established by the Ministry of Interior. The establishment of legal identity remains an essential step for IDPs to access public services, return to their homes,

and exercise their basic rights.

UNHCR also rehabilitated and provided equipment to the first unified national identification card centre in Ninewa. The centre will increase access to civil documentation for people living in the governorate. UNHCR is also working on rehabilitating other civil affairs directorates across the country.

"Here in Iraq, thousands of IDPs lack the appropriate civil documents to resume their lives and have access to services. With the EU's ongoing support, UNHCR is working to assist IDPs to obtain their civil documents. Obtaining civil documents is a step towards finding a durable solution," said Philippa Candler, Acting Representative of UNHCR in Iraq.

In addition to ongoing legal assistance and civil documentation support, since 2019 over 237,000 people in Iraq benefitted from EU funded camp management services. In addition to supporting displaced families with tents, core relief items, infrastructure repair and maintenance of roads, UNHCR ensured effective camp coordination and response. UNHCR and partners continued to carry out Communication with Communities initiatives within the camps to ensure persons of concern are familiar with the available services and also aware of COVID-19 preventive measures. With the support of the EU, and as part of the COVID-19 contingency plan, UNHCR also ensured availability of quarantine space in camps.

Thousands of displaced Iraqis in camps in Erbil receive nationality and national identification cards

Erbil, 18 December 2020 - Many internally displaced persons have lost, damaged or not been able to obtain civil status documentation, including birth certificates, as a result of factors linked to their forced displacement.

Since 2017, UNHCR has been working with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Interior in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), to implement mobile documentation centers in Ninewa, Erbil, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah to serve displaced people.

UNHCR is working with legal aid partners like SWEDO (Swedish Development Aid Organization) to assist thousands of displaced families across KRI and Nineveh to acquire essential legal documents that they

need to prove their identity, as well as to access public services and assistance

supported by Barzani Charity Foundation in camp management.



UN-Habitat completes the rehabilitation of 350 houses to support IDPs, refugees and vulnerable community members

Baghdad, 20 December 2020 - UN-Habitat Iraq has completed the rehabilitation of 350 houses resided by internally displaced persons, refugees and host community members in cities of Erbil, Duhok, Sumel, Mosul and Sinjar and as a result, 2,450 men, women, boys and girls are now benefitting from an improved and more secured living conditions. The beneficiary households in the five cities where selected on the basis of a socio-economic vulnerability assessment, which identifies vulnerable households based on the calculation of monthly per capita consumption with priority given

to female-headed households. UN-Habitat has worked with the Governorates of Erbil, Duhok and Ninewa, their respective municipalities and the neighbourhood committees throughout the planning and rehabilitation phases to ensure local ownership and sustainability of the project. The rehabilitation is part of the programme "Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in Countries Affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises-Headway EU Madad Fund", funded by the EU and implemented in partnership with UNDP.

Recognizing the current economic crisis and the high rate of unemployment in target cities, UN-Habitat has taken measures to ensure that a maximum percentage of the skilled and un-skilled labour are locally hired. Around 9,400 person/days are already created throughout the rehabilitation of the mentioned 350 houses.



Unearmarked funds from the Kingdom of Sweden help UNHCR meet the changing needs in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 December 2020 - UNHCR welcomes the recent contribution of 9 million Swedish Krona (~ USD 1 million) towards UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes to support vulnerable displaced persons in Iraq. This is in addition to the 10 million Swedish Krona (~USD 1.17 million) previously granted towards UNHCR operations in Iraq, bringing Sweden's total contribution in 2020 by the Kingdom of Sweden to 19 million Swedish Krona (~ USD 2.23 million).

Many communities include refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees, as well as host communities are struggling through a dire economic downturn. At a time when communities in Iraq were expecting stability and recovery, the COVID-19 pandemic has emerged and has further

impacted vulnerable communities. UNHCR and its partners moved promptly to adjust the response accordingly and ensure much needed humanitarian operations continued. This adjustment would not have been possible without the flexibility and generosity of donor countries, including the Kingdom of Sweden.

Flexible funding was vital again this month as UNHCR ramps up support to Iraqi returnees amid the large-scale closure of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps. Together with partners, UNHCR accelerated its programme to release seasonal cash assistance to help newly returning families meet their immediate needs in the coming winter months and provide legal assistance to families to obtain civil and property documentation.

Mr. Lars Ronnäs, the Ambassador of

Sweden to Iraq stated that, "humanitarian needs increase in Iraq. Every woman, man, girl and boy living in a dire situation should be given a chance to improve their living conditions. Right now, UNHCR's efforts to save lives and alleviate suffering are highly valuable and important".

"This generous and flexible contribution by the Kingdom of Sweden enables us to stand by vulnerable families when they need help the most, to provide them with the support and protection efficiently and in a timely manner," said Philippa Candler, UNHCR's Representative.

Sweden is one of UNHCR's largest donors of unearmarked contributions. Such continued, unearmarked support from donors remains vital for millions of families as well as for stability and durable solutions in Iraq.

Canada supports vulnerable families in Iraq through WFP

Baghdad, 31 December 2020 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) received a contribution from the Government of Canada of CAD 5.5 million, to assist up to 356,000 vulnerable displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees across Iraq to meet their monthly food needs.

Canada's generous contribution is vital to WFP's life-saving response during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people lost jobs and their sources of income. As a long-term partner of WFP, Canada's 'multi-year' commitment to communities in need, especially people exposed to more vulnerability such as women and girls, means that WFP is able to effectively forward-plan, to best

meet people's requirements.

In all WFP's activities, women, men, girls and boys are always consulted, enhancing gender equality in the decisions made about their assistance. Special distributions of food or cash also take place for people who are unable to travel to redeem their entitlements, such as new mothers or the elderly. When people have questions or concerns, both women and men staff (according to person's preference) are available to respond, in-person or by phone, via the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) hotline for people assisted.

In late 2020, WFP Iraq commenced a gender transformative programme,

towards enhancing strong gender elements in all its activities.

"WFP is extremely grateful to the Government of Canada and the Canadian people for their long-term support to families in need, during a challenging period in Iraq," said WFP Iraq Representative Abdirahman Meygag. "We thank Canada for continuing its partnership with WFP, both in Iraq and beyond."

Canadian contributions to WFP in Iraq are used where most needed. In past years, they have been used towards resilience and livelihoods projects, supporting families who return home following conflict to help rebuild their lives.

Beautiful Missan Project: Working towards rehabilitation of recreational infrastructure and job creation



Missan, 28 October 2020- Funded by the European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Beautiful Missan project that focuses on the rehabilitation of recreational infrastructure and job creation. The two-year project supports socio-economic growth through eco-tourism, restoration of cultural heritage and urban beautification. It is implemented in partnership with the Governorate of Missan and Oxfam, under the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development.

A townhall meeting, held in Missan on 28 October 2020, discussed the project activities and priorities with representatives of the local authorities, communities and academia, implementing organizations and other stakeholders.

Governor of Missan, Mr. Ali Dawe Lazim, said: "Through the resilience, hard work and commitment of our local population, we will work together to rebuild Missan and promote both our heritage and future potential. This project seeks to promote the role of women and youth in shaping and building a better future for all, for this we are very proud and hope other places will follow this example."

"I am very pleased to see the launch of this project in Missan," said the European Union's Chargé d'Affaires a.i. in Iraq, Mr. Jean Bernard Bolvin. "Missan is an extremely rich cultural and environmental area. The valorisation of the center of Al Amara, the rehabilitation of recreational sites and renovation of touristic spots within the city will create jobs and skills opportunities, especially for youth and women, and improve living conditions

of communities during these very difficult times. But this project is also an important occasion to stay strong and build a future, to think of tourism opportunities that are forthcoming and to create stimulus for the private sector. Led by the Governor, Mr. Ali Dawe Lazim, and with the help of the very resilient people of Missan, I am certain that the preservation and valorisation of the city area will provide long-term contribution to the socio-economic development plan for the Governorate. And I wish all our partners the best of success for this important project."

Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad, said: "Missan has a wealth of natural resources and cultural heritage. Thanks to funding from the European Union and the cooperation of the local authorities, the Beautiful Missan project will help accelerate job creation, eco-tourism and economic development. We look forward to supporting the local communities and businesses to sustainably shape the future of their Governorate."

Country Director of Oxfam in Iraq, Mr. Andres Gonzalez, stated: "This is an exciting opportunity for us to work with

local communities and create job opportunities through initiatives that will enhance urban beautification, improve public spaces and promote local business. Iraq has experienced decades of socio-political and economic turmoil, but the resilience and fortitude of the Iraqi people never ceases to amaze, I have every confidence that this initiative will bring together communities from across Missan to collectively tackle the challenges they face –unemployment, poverty, poor infrastructure – and showcase the potential of Beautiful Missan to the rest of the world."

Missan is one of the poorest governorates in Iraq and has a disproportionately high share of people living below the poverty line. A high population growth rate coupled with urbanization has put increased pressure on all service sectors. As unemployment remains high, the Beautiful Missan project will also focus on skills training and creating employment opportunities for women and youth in particular. This will be achieved through city renovation projects, as well as supporting and promoting small and medium enterprises and the tourism sector.

The programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development aims at contributing to the stability and socio-economic development of Iraq through enhancing good governance at the local level. It is working to improve the ability of selected governorates to efficiently manage local government and public services. Economic growth and job creation are prioritized, with a focus on green projects, involving youth and women, in addition to enhancing the living conditions of returnees and in conflict affected areas.

The programme fact sheet can be downloaded through this link: <https://bit.ly/2Wlw17e>



UNCTAD: New system boosts ease of doing business in Iraq



Baghdad, 28 October 2020 - A new online single window system for business registration in Iraq is supporting an entrepreneurial environment during COVID-19.

Opening a business in Baghdad has never been easier. All that is needed is one dream, one form and one payment to complete the administrative side of establishing operations.

Budding entrepreneurs can reserve a name, register, and get a tax and social security number in a few simple steps, thanks to a new platform piloted this month, which simplifies and speeds up the business registration process.

The new "single-window" system – business.mot.gov.iq – simplifies a process that took dozens of separate steps and multiple in-person visits into one that can be completed with a few clicks on an entirely contactless registration, regulation and reporting portal.

It supports Iraqis wanting to create a business for the first time, after a

change of occupation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The system is the result of collaborative efforts by UNCTAD, the governments of Iraq and the US and the Global Entrepreneurship Network. It's scheduled to go live in the coming weeks after live testing with real case scenarios and training of government staff.

Improving business environment

"Improving the business environment in Iraq is our top priority," said Mohammed Honoun, Iraqi deputy minister of trade. "Automation of government sectors is a critical part of that process."

While the system is currently only available to Baghdad-based business owners, the government plans to roll it out across the nation over time.

"We are proud to work with entities that are committed to investing in economic development, especially in Iraq, where the need is great and potentially transformative for the

nation," said James Zhan, UNCTAD's investment and enterprise director.

He lauded the initiative, pointing to the positive collaboration between the partners who made it possible.

Tackling barriers to doing business Iraqi businesses need all the help they can get. The conflict-affected country is a difficult place to do business, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the situation.

Iraq ranks 172 out of 190 economies in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index for 2020.

Improving the business environment and simplifying government procedures is the first step in boosting the country's ranking and supporting would-be entrepreneurs.

"We welcome the Iraqi government's direction towards economic reform and appreciate its efforts in automating services," said the World Bank's Ramzi Namaan.

"This system encourages more citizens to start companies and bolsters the confidence of investors," said Jonathan Ortman, president of the Global Entrepreneurship Network.

He said the pandemic has underscored the importance of both contactless transaction technology and supporting entrepreneurship to recover lost jobs and power economic growth. The new platform serves both objectives.

Online registration also greatly encourages women, who represent half of the Iraqi society, to quickly start a business and participate in the country's economy.

UNCTAD helped develop a similar product for the Benin government, which saw its use more than triple as the pandemic took hold.

The Republic of Korea helps WFP provide assistance to conflict-affected families in Iraq

Baghdad, 5 November 2020 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a generous contribution of US\$600,000 from the Republic of Korea to help provide food assistance for three months for more than 350,000 people in camps in Iraq.

"I am very pleased that the Republic of Korea is able to continue its flexible contribution this year to support WFP's work for crisis-affected people in Iraq, including internally displaced people and refugees," said Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Iraq Jang Kyung-Wook. "It is encouraging that WFP has been pioneering diverse innovative

solutions to ensure people's access to food amid the COVID-19 situation, and the Republic of Korea will continue its partnership with WFP to provide lifesaving assistance to those in most need in Iraq."

The new contribution will allow WFP to support up to 280,000 displaced Iraqis who had to leave their homes due to conflict in addition to 76,000 Syrian refugees through monthly electronic vouchers, mobile money and direct cash transfers. This allows families to purchase the food of their choice and at the same time support the local economy, strengthening local markets,

and stimulating traders to buy from local farmers and producers.

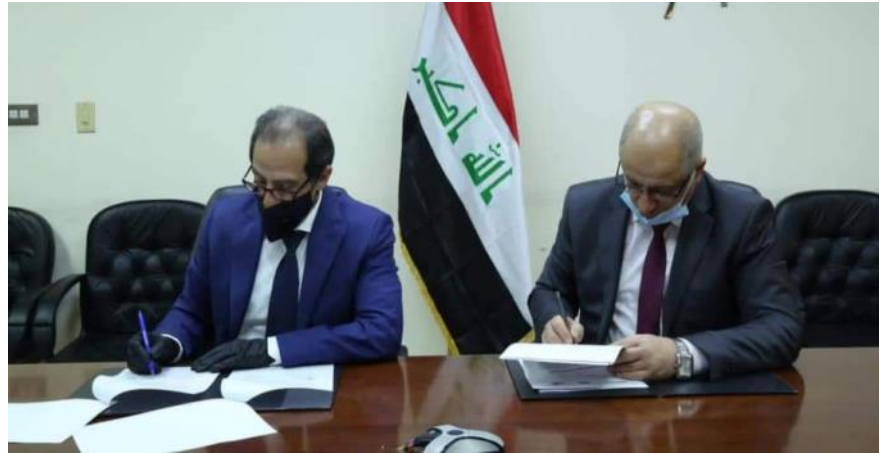
"We are grateful to the people and government of the Republic of Korea for their continued support to WFP's work in Iraq, to help meet the food needs of conflict-affected women, men and children, whose situation has now worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic," said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag.

The past months have seen an increase in the number of people requiring food and livelihoods assistance in Iraq – up to 2.3 million compared to 1.8 million people at the start of 2020.

The Government of Iraq and UN-Habitat continue to work together to address challenges in informal settlements

Baghdad, 4 November 2020 - Today, the Steering Committee on the National Programme for Informal Settlements, chaired by H.E. Dr. Khalid Battal Al-Najim, met to discuss the challenges in informal settlements. Currently in Iraq, approximately 3.5 million people reside in more than 4,000 informal settlements across the country. Informal settlements are densely populated with inadequate houses, poor water and sanitation facilities and little or no waste management. Recommended measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission such as handwashing, distancing and self-quarantine are often extremely difficult in informal settlements.

One of the main challenges concerning informal settlements is the lack of updated and comprehensive information. In 2017, for the first time in Iraq UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Planning defined the boundaries of informal settlements in 15 governorates of Iraq based on analysis of the satellite imageries using geographical information system. This allowed the relevant government authorities to get basic information on informal settlements, such as their



number, location, size and population. As the next step, H.E. Minister of Planning announced that the ministry with technical support from UN-Habitat will plan for a comprehensive survey on informal settlements, which will allow the government to have an updated and detailed understandings of the current conditions, critical challenges faced, and possible solutions in each informal settlement. Collaboration with private sector will also be sought to improve housing and living conditions in informal

settlements.

Mr. Wael Al Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, confirmed continued support from UN-Habitat to the Government and people of Iraq, both at policy level and on the ground, to respond to problems in informal settlements. After the Steering Committee meeting, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Ministry of Planning and UN-Habitat to confirm their partnership and commitment to work together on informal settlements.

Extension of UNDP's stabilization programme to support greater number of returns



Baghdad, 9 November 2020 – Support to Iraq's displaced populations through the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure and services damaged in the ISIL conflict, livelihoods creation, local capacity development and social cohesion will continue under a three-year extension of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq's flagship programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS).

The extension, which was endorsed by

the Government of Iraq and international partners at the FFS Steering Committee held today in Baghdad, requires \$660 million through FFS to cover the remaining priority needs of areas liberated from ISIL - Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din. The estimate was based on a comprehensive needs assessment undertaken by UNDP this year in consultation with the Government of Iraq, within the mandated sectors and parameters of FFS.

To date, UNDP has mobilized \$1.3 billion from 27 donors and partners, and from the Government of Iraq, and has provided more than 10 million Iraqis with improved infrastructure and services, under critical sectors such as electricity, housing, health, water, education, sewerage, livelihoods, municipalities, roads and bridges, capacity support and social cohesion through local community reconciliation activities. It has assisted 4.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home.

The extended programme will include:

- A focus on areas that have

experienced difficulties in returns;

- Rehabilitation of infrastructure that supports productive sectors like agriculture and small business;
- Sustainable livelihood activities that promote employment opportunities;
- Strengthened mainstreaming of human rights principles, environmental sustainability, conflict sensitivity and gender in all sectors of work;
- A clear exit strategy in its final year 2023, handing over ownership of the implementation of immediate stabilization activities to the Government of Iraq.

Speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSEC), the Deputy Secretary-General of COMSEC Dr. Farhad Neamattallah Hussain reiterated the Government of Iraq's commitments to supporting the return of displaced Iraqis.

"We welcome the decision to extend FFS, which has made a tremendous impact on stabilizing the areas

Extension of UNDP's stabilization programme to support greater number of returns *(continued)*

liberated from ISIL. However, more work remains to be done. There is still an urgent need to deliver on the stabilization needs of displaced communities, and to bolster social cohesion and community reconciliation efforts to ensure people can both rebuild their lives, and peacefully co-exist.

"With assistance from UNDP and the generous support of the international community we are committed to making this happen," added Dr. Hussain.

"Today's extension of FFS marks a critical milestone for Iraqis who are still displaced across the country", says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"We will continue to work alongside the Government of Iraq to create the necessary conditions for safe and dignified returns, with a greater focus on the hardest-to-return populations. The extension of FFS emphasizes the strong partnership between UNDP, the Government of Iraq, and the international community, who, through their generous support since the programme's inception in 2015, have been instrumental in bringing millions of displaced Iraqis home. We are extremely grateful for their commitment and are proud to continue working together to bring stability, peace, and prosperity to Iraq under this programme extension," she adds.

To guide its programming and deliver

on stabilization priorities, FFS will continue to use its proven agile and transparent mechanisms such as special anti-corruption measures, ability to conduct rapid assessments, dedicated service center to fast-track procurement, multi-layered monitoring, and the use of local labor.

FFS was established in 2015 as a mechanism to channel funds for the Iraqi Government's immediate stabilization priorities, to support the return of IDPs from the five liberated governorates. With much appreciation for the continued trust and confidence of partners, UNDP aims to continue delivering at scale to support returns and protect the stabilization gains in the areas liberated from ISIL.

JICA and UNDP Iraq renew partnership agreement to accelerate infrastructure projects for socio-economic development

Baghdad, 11 November 2020 – Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and UNDP Iraq have signed a renewed partnership agreement to monitor and support the acceleration of the implementation of socio-economic infrastructure projects in Iraq.

The projects are implemented by the Government of Iraq (GoI) with loan assistance from JICA with the aim of improving the economic recovery and living conditions of Iraqi communities, focusing on key sectors including electricity, water and sanitation, oil, irrigation, transportation, industry, health and communication.

JICA Chief Representative Kei Toyama states, "Since 2009, UNDP has been an important partner for JICA in Iraq. Our partnership has contributed to the

strengthened monitoring mechanism of GoI, addressing challenges faced by those projects. We look forward to further acceleration of GoI's project implementation under our joint supports under this 10th agreement."

According to Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq Zena Ali Ahmad, "The signing of this renewed agreement between UNDP and JICA demonstrates the steadfast commitment of the Government and people of Japan to sustainable development in Iraq and its communities, and we look forward to seeing the results that this strengthened partnership will bring, particularly amidst the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic."

As a result of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 Iraq needs continued and focused support from the

international community. With the signing of the renewed agreement, the GoI, JICA and UNDP commit to projects that will boost public services and private sector development in Iraq.



UNHCR completed renovation of Sheikhan Emergency Hospital

Baghdad, 17 November 2020 - As part of supporting displaced persons and the host communities that receives them, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency supported the renovation of the Sheikhan Emergency Hospital. The support included construction of a new hospital department to increase hospital intake and capacity.

Now more displaced persons, refugees and host communities have access to health services.

UNHCR continues to support the health sector and to ensure that displaced people have access to health services amid recent spike in Covid-19 infections.



Steering Committee Meeting for IOM project in Basra focused on key challenges for CSOs in Basra



Basra, 17 November 2020 - IOM Iraq hosted the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting for its project in Basra. Attendees included high-level governmental officials, PMU representatives, tribal leaders and CSOs; discussions focused on key challenges for civil society organizations (CSO) in Basra. The project is funded by the European Commission.

The overall objectives of the project, 'Contributing to Ongoing Stabilization Efforts in Iraq by Preventing and Reducing Violence in Communities at Risk in Basra', are to provide space for local conflict resolution and prevention, and to reduce local sources of violence.

Ministry of Health, UNFPA launch the National Family Planning Strategy



Baghdad, 22 November 2020 - The Minister of Health, Dr Hasan Al-Tamimi, launched today the National Family Planning Strategy (2021-2025), developed with the support of UNFPA and funding from Canada and Sweden and in consultation with many stakeholders, including women and youth to ensure that their rights and needs are well addressed.

The launch of the strategy is a strategic initiative as family planning is one of the most cost-effective strategies to reduce maternal and infant mortality, adolescent's pregnancies, and contribute to the well-being of women, their education and even livelihood.

Exactly one year ago at the Nairobi Summit on the International Conference on Population & Development (ICPD), Iraq made commitments to reduce adolescents pregnancies, increase access to family planning, reduce maternal mortality and GBV, and increase livelihood

opportunities for young people. If fulfilled, these commitments will support the nation in harnessing the demographic dividend and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

During his speech, Minister Al-Tamimi said: "The National Family Planning Strategy will provide families, women and young people opportunities to build their future with confidence. It will help Iraqis organise their families better, plan financially for a better future and will reduce the burden of the health system. We thank all our partners, the different directorates, the UN Agencies, especially UNFPA for supporting the Ministry's team in the development of this strategy that will hopefully improve the livelihoods of individuals."

Commenting on the importance of the strategy, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, said: "In Iraq, the Adolescent Fertility rate is still

among the highest in the region (70/1,000 adolescent girls); but the use of modern contraceptives is about 36%. It means that many couples and individuals who need family planning services do not have access to them, which violates their reproductive rights."

"UNFPA will continue to support the Ministry of Health at the Federal and Kurdistan Region levels with the strategy implementation. Our focus will be to ensure the strategy has a costed multisectoral people-based implementation plan, to strengthen the capacity of the public healthcare system to provide voluntary, high-quality family planning services, to improve the supply chain management and ensure the last mile delivery and to put the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people and people with disabilities in the centre of health and population policies," she added.

Through the entire process of strategy development, UNFPA worked closely with and provided technical support to the team of the Ministry of Health. UNFPA will continue to support the Government of Iraq during the implementation phase to ensure that all families and women can benefit from family planning services that are available, accessible, acceptable and high quality.

The strategy in English and a summary in Arabic can be found on the following link:

<https://iraq.unfpa.org/en/resources/national-family-planning-strategy-2021-2025>

Stakeholders from Basra, Missan and Thi Qar collaborate for local development



Baghdad, 23 November 2020 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) brought together over 90 representatives of local governments, civil society, women, youth, academia, the private sector and international organizations to collaborate and contribute to the implementation of three local projects: Beautiful Basra, Beautiful Missan and Sumereen in Thi Qar. The projects fall under the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the three Governorates and the non-governmental organizations Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid, Oxfam, and Un Ponte Per.

The projects aim at creating at least 1200 jobs through the rehabilitation of public infrastructure and the establishment of recreational areas, with a focus on the restoration of cultural heritage, urban beautification, and promotion of local eco-tourism.

In his opening remarks in Baghdad, Deputy Minister of Planning, Mr. Maher Johan, said: "Iraq's Ministry of planning has a long strategic partnership with UNDP through which we have been working closely on sustainable development. We are grateful for UNDP as well as the EU for helping us to tailor and implement innovative solutions to local development challenges, specifically in the past few years. The people of Basra, Missan and Thi Qar, like elsewhere in Iraq, deserve better living conditions. And, for that, we are committed to continuing our efforts to make this a reality."

Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Ambassador Martin Huth, reiterated "the European

Union's commitment to stand by the people of Iraq and assist the authorities and communities in their pursuit of stability, socio-economic development and recovery." He added: "We are glad to see key stakeholders work together to undertake concrete actions to ensure that development results are sustainable and effectively serve the needs of local populations in the Governorates of Basra, Missan and Thi Qar."

Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad, said: "The southern Governorates of Iraq have a wealth of cultural heritage, unique ecological diversity as well as natural and human resources that can boost local development. Thanks to generous funding from the European Union, UNDP and partners are now able to support the local authorities and communities in addressing socio-economic challenges and moving towards sustainable recovery."

Participants discussed collaboration opportunities and synergies between the projects during 17 sessions, including 8 roundtables. Bulgaria's Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Ms. Denitsa Sacheva, remotely joined one of

the sessions to introduce different labor market policies, employment programmes and incentives for youth.

A joint synergy action plan was produced, focusing on clean energy and environment, cultural heritage preservation, agriculture, employment and youth engagement, gender mainstreaming, strategic communications, in addition to the role of the private sector and civil society organizations in local development. The actions include sharing knowledge, best practices and databases, peer-to-peer activities targeting partnerships with the private sector for job creation, promotion of entrepreneurship and tourism, and protection of local production.

Governor of Missan, Mr. Ali Dawe Lazim, noted: "This meeting helped us to recalibrate our perceptions of the vital role that local stakeholders can play with hands joined for local development, through showcasing similar successful experiences in other countries such as Slovenia. At the Governorate level, we will do our utmost to collaborate according to the synergy action plan in order to revive socio-economic opportunities in the south, rebuild and recover with the public interest of the local communities in mind."

The programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development aims at contributing to the stability and socio-economic development of Iraq through enhancing good governance at the local level. It is working to improve the ability of selected governorates to efficiently manage local government and public services. Economic growth and job creation are prioritized, with a focus on green projects and the inclusion of youth and women.



COVID-19: EU and ILO project to improve labour governance and working conditions in Iraq (ILO)



Baghdad, 23 November 2020 - The European Union (EU) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have signed a new agreement to enhance labour governance, inspection and working conditions in Iraq, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Iraq's labour market, which has been long-hampered by a protracted economic downturn and political instability, now has to contend with the COVID-19 crisis, which is having devastating effects on vulnerable workers in the country.

The Euro 3 million project, funded by the EU, will seek to address some of the challenges imposed by the pandemic, as well as the longer-term decent work priorities of Iraq.

Focusing on the agricultural sector, the project will strengthen the labour inspection system in line with International Labour Standards, through

policy development and capacity building. It will also focus on improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) through the development of a national OSH policy and programme in consultation with social partners, as well as other technical support to government officials, particularly labour inspectors and staff of the National Center for Occupational Health and Safety.

The project will also work closely with social partners to raise their awareness on labour inspection, OSH and fundamental principles and rights at work, so they can better engage in programmes to promote compliance with labour legislations and respond to COVID-19.

"This project will provide great opportunities for collaboration with our partners the ILO and EU in improving labour inspection and Occupational Safety and Health. For the Ministry, these areas are key priorities, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we continue to ensure that workers have access to better and safer working environments," said the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Adel Al-Rikabi.

"Access to decent work is the main route out of poverty. At the same time, having a job is only one part of the picture. Employment must be safe for all members of society, including women and people with disabilities. This project will support this by promoting compliance with labour standards and enhanced social dialogue" said the EU Ambassador, Martin Huth.

The project will also ensure that

agricultural workers directly benefit from improved working conditions through skills development opportunities, awareness raising and farm-level interventions. A compliance model will be developed and piloted on selected farms to improve working conditions and compliance with national legislation and International Labour Standards. In addition, farm workers will benefit from employment services and support from cooperatives and that will help improve their employability in the longer-term.

"With Iraq's high unemployment rate, which has further increased due to the COVID-19 crisis, it is crucial to create decent jobs to help people generate much-needed income," said the ILO's Country Coordinator in Iraq Maha Kattaa. "However, we must also support good labour governance and compliance with Labour Standards to ensure inclusion of as many vulnerable workers as possible, and to ensure that they keep their jobs for as long as possible. Decent work is what this partnership seeks to achieve, through close collaboration with our national and social partners."

Iraq, represented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and social partners and the ILO recently signed the first Iraq Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), to promote decent work and strengthen Iraq's capacity to mainstream decent work in social and economic policies. The programme is implemented through close partnerships between the ILO, the government and employers' and workers' representatives in the country.

Republic of Korea extends support to stabilization efforts in Iraq

Baghdad, 25 November 2020 - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea (MoFA) is supporting the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with an additional USD 5M million to support stabilization activities in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq.

The Republic of Korea's contribution will be channelled through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) which supports the return of Internally Displaced Populations from the five ISIL liberated governorates. This is Korea's sixth contribution to FFS since 2015, bringing its total contribution to US\$23,950,000.

Based on priorities identified by the Government of Iraq and the local authorities, UNDP will use the generous contribution from Korea to rehabilitate basic infrastructure and repair damaged

houses to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis from Sinjar and surrounding areas. The focus on Sinjar in Iraq's Ninewa governorate, homeland of the Yazidis and other minority groups who suffered atrocities under ISIL, stands as a key area for UNDP's stabilization programming.

"In mid-2020, Sinjar experienced a marked increase in returnees compared to previous years. UNDP continues to prioritize this area and is upscaling its efforts to meet the critical needs of returnees across a number of sectors including housing, electricity, water and education, as well as livelihoods creation and social cohesion," says Resident Representative of UNDP, Zena Ali-Ahmad.

"We are very grateful to the Republic of Korea for this important and timely contribution," adds Ms. Ali-Ahmad.

"I am very pleased that the Republic of Korea has provided contributions to FFS for six consecutive years since its launch in 2015, and I hope this year's contribution can help facilitate the implementation of UNDP's stabilization programme during its three-year extension until 2023," said Jang Kyung-Wook, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Iraq. "Supporting internally displaced persons and returnees in areas liberated from ISIL is one of the main priorities in our assistance to Iraq, and we will continue to work with UNDP to help them rebuild their lives and achieve sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion."

To date, UNDP's Funding Facility has implemented over 2,560 projects in 31 locations in Ninewa, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk.

FAO Iraq has distributed high-quality fodder seeds to selected farmers to improve livestock productivity and animal nutrition in Nineveh Governorate

Mosul, 26 November 2020 - FAO Iraq started its fodder seeds distribution for the first batch of livestock farmers' benefit of its EU-funded FAO project entitled: "Support of agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq".

The distribution was conducted in the presence of Engineer Fahd Ali, the Associate Director of Agriculture of Nineveh, the Director of the Department of Livestock, FAO's Project Representative in Nineveh, and a number of livestock farmers.

Engineer Fahd Ali explained that the distribution of high-quality animal fodder seeds to 500 livestock farmers from the governorate would allow for the planting of 1000 dunoms of dedicated fodder crops, which nutritionally are of high quality that will improve the productivity of animal production. It is worth indicating that

Nineveh governorate plays an important role in sheep farming for the domestic market and export.

FAO aims to improve various aspects of the whole livestock value chain; the project will undertake several interventions in the livestock sector by addressing milk hygiene, storage, fattening, and dairy processing through training sessions offered to livestock farmers, milk producers and equipping them with the necessary equipment. The beneficiaries have been selected based on a field survey carried out by FAO in cooperation with the Ministry's staff earlier in the year.

Dr. Salah Elhadj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, wished to thank the EU for their generous support to help develop the agri-food sector in Iraq as well as the excellent cooperation received from the national and local authorities.

Dr. Chedly Kayouli, FAO livestock



expert in charge of this project's activities, said that he was delighted to see the seeds' distribution on time before the planting season's arrival. He hoped this would also make a change possible for farmers to grow more livestock fodder crops, as there is clear demand for nutritious feed for animals.

Norway renews commitment to stabilization with new \$7.7m contribution



Baghdad, 29 November 2020 – The Government of Norway has contributed NOK 70,000,000 (US\$7.7 million) to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which supports stabilization and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the five governorates liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh).

This is Norway's twelfth contribution to FFS, bringing the country's total contribution to \$56.2 million.

"We are grateful to Norway for this timely additional contribution to the

FFS, which was recently extended until 2023 due to the urgent priorities that remain in liberated areas. Under this extension, we will see a greater focus on areas with the hardest-to-return populations to facilitate more returns, as well as additional emphasis on sustainable livelihood activities and sustainability concerns," says the UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"Since 2015, Norway has been an invaluable partner to UNDP Iraq, and we are extremely grateful for its continued commitment to peace and stability in Iraq, as the country

continues to reel from the devastation of the ISIL conflict," she adds.

Norwegian Ambassador to Jordan and Iraq, Ambassador Tone Allers said: "I am highly impressed by the work that the UNDP is doing in Iraq. The FFS secures not only a lasting development and stabilization of Iraq through the rehabilitation of areas demolished in the ISIL conflict, but also ensures the possibility for many Iraqis to return to their homes in a safe, sustainable and dignified manner. I have myself seen how critical this is for bringing peace and a better future to the Iraqis, and Norway is proud to continue our support for the UNDP and FFS in this work."

Established in June 2015, FFS works in the five liberated governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din. To date, UNDP has mobilized \$1.3 billion from 27 donors and partners, and from the Government of Iraq, and has provided more than 10 million Iraqis with improved infrastructure and services, under critical sectors such as electricity, housing, health, water, education, sewerage, livelihoods, municipalities, roads and bridges, capacity support and social cohesion. It has assisted 4.7 million IDPs to return home.

International Trade Center: Promoting inclusive economic growth and job creation in Iraq



Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - Unemployment remains a persistent challenge in Iraq especially for youth and women. Many internally displaced persons are unemployed, underemployed, informally employed, or out of the labour force. The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded these employment challenges. In this context, providing jobs and livelihoods remains a high priority in order to promote social cohesion and improve resilience.

Agriculture has the potential to make a major contribution to employment in Iraq but is affected by low farm productivity, weak value chains and a challenging business environment. To address this, the EU is launching a EUR 22.5 million project, 'Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy' (SAAVI). The five year project is being implemented by the International Trade Center (ITC) in close collaboration with the Government of Iraq and other local partners

SAAVI seeks to enhance the competitiveness of agriculture and related activities and improve trade

policy in Iraq. It will address farm and firm level challenges and strengthen the value chains in the agriculture sector. This will be done through analysis of the value chain, introduction of new production strategies and training to farmers on product diversification for domestic markets.

It will also build the capacities of micro, small, and medium enterprises and broaden the knowledge and skills base for youth including training on entrepreneurship and business skills. Technical and vocational skills programmes will also be strengthened to better match the needs of the private sector.

Support will also be given to policymakers and key institutions involved in the WTO accession process, including capacity building on trade negotiation, policy formulation, and coordination. WTO membership will help Iraq to complete domestic policy and reforms for the modernization of its business environment and achieve effective integration into global economy. Since the process of negotiation towards WTO accession is unique to each country, project

activities will assist officials throughout the process.

The EU Ambassador to Iraq, Mr Martin Huth said "The EU is committed to supporting efforts to increase economic opportunities across Iraq. Agriculture value chains have the potential to provide decent work to many young Iraqis, men and women. At the same time, the project will support the Iraqi government as it develops its trade policy and progresses towards the country's accession to WTO, which is a key component of economic development and job creation."

The Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton said, "ITC is committed to assist the government and MSMEs in Iraq to increase the competitiveness and diversification of the economy. We will use our experience in strategy design and value chain development to support MSMEs in the country better realize their potential for job creation and income generation. Together with our partners, we will strengthen the agriculture and agri-food value chain, and support trade policy interventions aligned with government priorities".

Unlocking the potential of the agriculture sector of the country will lead to the creation of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth particularly those living in rural areas who have been affected by prolonged conflict. The project will also contribute to mitigating the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is presenting new challenges for Iraq, and help in the reconstruction of the rural economy.

It forms part of the overall EU approach to employment creation, private sector development and agribusiness in supporting economic recovery and reform in Iraq.

by ITC News

FAO and the European Union support the recovery of agricultural livelihoods in Northern Iraq

Mosul, 30 November 2020 - Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, Representative of the Food and Agriculture (FAO) Organization of the United Nations in Iraq accompanied by FAO lead technical team, met on Monday with Mr. Najm Al-Jubouri – Governor of Nineveh.

The discussion focused on FAO activities and programs in the

Governorate, as well as the challenges faced by the agriculture sector and availability of water resources. Dr. Elhajj Hassan presented to the Governor FAO's EU funded projects to support the recovery of agricultural livelihoods through revitalization of food production, value chains, income generation and secure irrigation water through the rehabilitation of Al-

Jazeera Irrigation system in Nineveh. Dr. El Hajj Hassan thanked the European Union for their support to the agriculture sector in Iraq and convey the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková's greetings to Mr. Al-Jubouri; he also stated, "Through these projects, FAO will provide the necessary support to

FAO and the European Union support the recovery of agricultural livelihoods in Northern Iraq *(continued)*

improve the agriculture sector that will positively impact all of Iraq.”

H.E. Mr. Al-Jubouri discussed ways of enhancing and strengthening cooperation and coordination with FAO. He praised FAO's role in advancing the agricultural sector in Nineveh Governorate and called on the organization to provide more support to the governorate. At the end of the meeting, the Governor thanked the EU for their generous support to develop

the agriculture sector in Nineveh and FAO in Iraq. He expressed his willingness and readiness for full cooperation for the development of the agricultural sector in Nineveh Governorate.

The visit marks the distribution of wheat seeds in support of farmers in Nineveh under this EU funded project, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Governorate of Nineveh. This distribution is planned

to empower the farming community in the governorate and increase availability of food staples, especially following the severe damage caused by the latest military operations.

"I am delighted to see that, thanks to the strong collaboration between FAO and the national and local authorities, distribution of inputs to farmers is starting in Nineveh under this EU funded intervention", said Mr. Martin Huth, the EU Ambassador to Iraq. "I strongly believe that the agriculture and the agri-food sectors have a great potential for the diversification of the economy in Iraq, and restoring the historical agricultural capacities of the Nineveh region is key to such development. In a time where the country has been badly hit by the coronavirus pandemic, livelihoods have been affected and many families have seen increased needs in food security in a region already struggling from past years insecurity. I do hope that the roll out of these activities can quickly help farmers in the long-awaited recovery."



Ministry of Planning, UNFPA reaffirm commitment to the ICPD promises

Baghdad, 1 December 2020 – The Ministry of Planning and UNFPA organised yesterday a conference to reaffirm Iraq's commitment to the programme of action of the Nairobi Summit in 2019 which marked 25 years since the International Conference on Population & Development.

At the Nairobi summit last year, Iraq made 20 commitments addressing the rights of women and couples to have as many children as they want and when they want, to have healthy parenthood, be free of gender-based violence and harmful practices and have means to support themselves and their families through decent employment and education.

Yesterday's conference which was hosted by the Minister of Planning, Dr Khalid Al-Battal, was attended by the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Ms Ivan Faiek Jabru, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, Director Generals from different ministries, the Head of the Central Statistical Organization, Dr Diaa Awad and members of the Population Policies Committee, in addition to civil society and private sector representatives.

Minister Battal said in his speech: "Iraq faces great challenges, especially amid

Covid-19 and its repercussions on the different groups in society, especially women and girls. The pandemic has contributed to an increase in gender-based violence, mainly against women, and exacerbated poverty and unemployment rates across the country. Regardless of these challenges, Iraq is still committed to the ICPD commitments and we call on the international community to increase its support to enable the country to fulfil its commitments and obligations."

For her part, Dr Columbia emphasised the relevance of the Nairobi commitments to our present: "Health and social protection systems are struggling to meet the needs of affected people those infected with COVID-19

including pregnant women; survivors of gender-based violence; women who are locked at homes and being at risk of domestic violence, unemployed, especially youth, and so many others."

"The number of vulnerable populations has increased due to the pandemic. Considering the current situation, the commitments made in 2019 are even more urgent now", she concluded.

The event was followed by the meeting of the Population Policies National Committee to discuss the national framework and roadmap that will provide women and girls and young people protection, access to sexual and reproductive health services and livelihood opportunities.



Economic reintegration: a pathway for peacebuilding and social cohesion

Baghdad, 2 December 2020 - When young people are active and engaged in their communities, the result is a peaceful and strong social fabric. In November, UNDP Iraq, in partnership with Kurdistan Human Rights Watch, implemented a multi-session programme to train vulnerable Iraqi youth and women in Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. The training sessions were separated by topic and focused on vocational skills including tailoring, barber skills, painting, computer skills, and English language skills.

"I registered for this course to improve my English. I received a lot of information that made me feel more confident when I speak. I look forward to the benefits from this course and other courses in order to teach my children or find a job." - Zainab, a participant in the English course.

A total of 369 participants in Anbar and 129 in Salah al-Din took part in training sessions, running from 8 November to 25 November. Over fifty percent of participants were women, as a key focus of the sessions was

empowering women from local communities, as well as youth. Iraq is considered one of the most youthful countries in the world with nearly half of its population less than 21 years old. UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme enables an environment for peace and social cohesion, including provision of economic reintegration opportunities for Iraq's large youth population. Ensuring equal opportunity for access to income-generating activities and bringing different segments of the community together is vital in achieving social cohesion.

"My ambition was always to be a seamstress. I registered through an electronic form, and after a while, my acceptance in this course appeared. This workshop is teaching me about designing and sewing clothes and upholstery, which are my passions. After this course I will work in a sewing workshop." -Dina, a participant in the seamstress course.

This programme was made possible thanks to generous support from the Government of Germany within support for stabilization and social cohesion in Iraq.



Improved access to basic services is essential to the return of IDPs

Baghdad, 6 December 2020 - Improved access to basic services is essential to the return of IDPs.

The water treatment plant in Husi community, Amriyat al-Fallujah, sustained damage during the conflict with ISIL, affecting more than 2,000 individuals in Anbar Governorate. IOM Iraq rehabilitated the plant, with funding from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees,

and Migration, improving water flow and quality - improving community access to potable water.

IOM Iraq rehabilitated the electricity network in Asry Al-Shimaly community, Baiji district, by installing new transformers, poles and lines. This will give 500 people, mostly returned IDPs, improved access to reliable electricity.



The manifold value of recruiting workers from the community

Mosul, 14 December 2020 - Aside from having helped to carry out construction work during the movement restrictions imposed by COVID19, employing workers from the target community has made it easier for families to deal with the disruptive but necessary invasion of their privacy during the rehabilitation of their war-damaged homes. Every single young mason, carpenter, tile worker and painter is a neighbor's son or nephew working under the watchful eye of the owner of the house. The on-going housing rehabilitation

works that are being conducted under the close supervision of the UN Habitat field team in Sikak and Matahin neighborhoods of west Mosul have improved so far the financial situation of over 42 unemployed workers recruited locally. Enhancing housing conditions and creating jobs for recent returnees are key components of the EU-funded area-based urban recovery interventions implemented under the programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability through Local Development' led by UNDP Iraq in partnership with UN-Habitat.



ILO in Iraq joins forces with local authorities in Dohuk to implement employment-intensive interventions

Baghdad, 18 December 2020 - The ILO in Iraq has joined forces with local authorities in the Governorate of Dohuk to implement integrated employment intensive investment programme (EIIP) interventions aimed at creating more than 180 decent jobs, as well as enhancing the employability of vulnerable groups, including Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons and host community members, while improving the local environment and infrastructure.

Supported by the Government of the Netherlands, these interventions are part of efforts being implemented under the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS) in Iraq, which seeks to improve access to employment, education and protection in the context of forced displacement.

“We are pleased to contribute to the creation of decent jobs for forcibly displaced people and vulnerable groups through these EIIP interventions,” said Mr. Hans Akerboom, Consul General of the Consulate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Erbil. “Together with other key areas of work, such as financial inclusion and supporting business start-ups, we can contribute in a positive way to make sure people have access to more and better decent job opportunities.”

The latest development follows the signing of two implementation agreements with the Directorates of Irrigation and Municipalities in the Dohuk Governorate. The former aims to repair and clean water irrigation channels and basins. This will help improve the efficiency of transporting water from the source to farm areas in five districts in the Dohuk Governorate. The second agreement will improve solid waste management by increasing the capacity of the Kwashe Sorting Plant, through operating a second line at the plant, and building the capacity of the local communities to adopt sorting from source approaches.

“These interventions are part of the ILO’s Decent Work Country Programme for Iraq, which aims to support job creation, private sector development, social protection, labour governance and social dialogue,” said Maha Kattaa, ILO Iraq Country Coordinator. “In addition to providing short-term employment, we are also linking our work to sustainable and long-term opportunities and development, such as skills



development, job matching, and entrepreneurship. In this case, we are also focusing on green jobs through irrigation and waste management.”

These initiatives will help enhance productivity on farms and improve environmental health in targeted areas. They will also generate short-term decent employment for vulnerable workers, including 50 per cent women, providing them with much-needed income.

“We would like to thank you for your support, especially in helping farmers during these uncertain circumstances and time of crisis,” said Heja Salih, Director of the Irrigation Directorate at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in the Kurdish Region of Iraq.

“This project will increase the number of workers and capacity for sorting, which is very important for us...in addition, those workers can make use of the capabilities they learn here for future (work opportunities),” added Hazim Silevany, Director of the Kwashe Sorting Plant under the General Directorate of Municipalities. In brief:

- EIIP will help create 184 short-term jobs for refugees, internally displaced persons and host community members. This is equivalent to around 10,000 worker days.

- Around 50 per cent of those employed will be women.

- EIIP interventions will help improve 50 KM of irrigation channels, and support the sorting of 240 TON of solid waste per day for 6 months.

- The projects will engage the local community in different areas, such as recruitment processes, prioritizing needs, and adopting sustainable practices (such as sorting from source).

- The EIIP team is working on other sectors as well to create decent

jobs for forcibly displaced persons and host community members. Sectors include transportation, municipal services and public maintenance, linking these works with skills development opportunities and empowering private sector contractors.

- The ILO is developing standard operations procedures (SOPs) for the EIIP approach, taking into consideration the unique context in Iraq. The SOPs cover relevant conditions that aim to provide an integrated employment intensive investment system and enhance the working environment and improve the accessibility of forcibly displaced persons to national services and decent jobs.

- PROSPECTS is a global partnership which brings together the ILO, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank and operates in eight countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as well as the East/Horn of Africa. The ILO’s contribution to the partnership in Iraq includes EIIP, enterprise and skills development and efforts to enhance access to the labour market and social protection.



Up to 960,000 people in Basra to have access to safe drinking water thanks to the Netherlands' support to UNICEF and UNDP

Baghdad, 21 December 2020 – The Netherlands has committed USD \$6,41 million to support UNICEF and The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to ensure that almost a million residents of Basra governorate have access to safe water. This support comes at a time when less than 11% of Basra's population has access to clean drinking water on site and the majority of households (8 out of 10) only receive 10 hours of water per day in their homes. And as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the need for clean water has become even more urgent for residents. "Access to clean and safe water is a basic human right, and this access can only be ensured when there is a good water management system in place. The



Netherlands is very pleased to help by sharing our extensive expertise in this field and contributing to improving the lives of citizens in Basra," explained the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands H.E. Michel Rentenaar. Conflict, climate change, water pollution and scarcity, and environmental waste have created a water crisis in large parts of Iraq. Basra, located in the southern part of the country, is the worst affected governorate, and a lack of proper sanitation and hygiene facilities have only compounded the situation. Health care facilities and schools often don't have clean water and soap on site, all of which can contribute to making vulnerable populations, among them children and women, more vulnerable to preventable diseases such as acute watery diarrhoea. "The support of the Dutch government will make a real difference in the lives of 960,000 Basrawis, including countless children and their families. With these resources and in partnership with the authorities in Basra and with UNDP, UNICEF will be able to help the Directorate of Water in its conservation efforts by equipping it with smart devices to measure water consumption, track leakages, and put a stop to any waste. We will also be able to ensure that more

children in at least 100 schools have safe water, families can cook and clean with peace of mind and with the knowledge that they can wash their hands without fear of getting sick by coming into contact with water," said Ms. Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq. In addition, decades of underinvestment in Basra's main water facilities such as pumping stations and water rehabilitation plants has resulted in decaying infrastructure. As part of their commitment to durable solutions, both UNICEF and UNDP are working to build the capacity of Iraq's water infrastructure. This latest support from the Netherlands will help the agencies to provide immediate relief to residents of Basra while maintaining their long-term work. "With this generous contribution from the Netherlands, we will work alongside UNICEF and the Government to ensure that more Iraqis can freely exercise their right of access to clean and safe water. UNDP will use its proven methods to rehabilitate four major, non-functional water complexes, focusing on those who are most vulnerable and ensuring no-one is left behind," explained Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad, UNDP's Resident Representative in Iraq.

New partnership with Germany to create sustainable employment opportunities for Iraqis

Baghdad, 21 December 2020 – Germany has reaffirmed its partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by investing EUR 30 million (US\$35.89 million) to enhance economic empowerment and create employment opportunities for vulnerable communities in Iraq. The contribution was made available by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with financing provided through Germany's KfW Development Bank. With that contribution, BMZ has over the past five years committed more than EUR 340 million to various UNDP programmes in Iraq.

Focusing on areas with the hardest-to-return populations in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din, the Building Resilience through Employment Promotion (BREP) project gives Iraq the opportunity to build forward better in its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will provide more than 16,000 Iraqis with short-term and medium-term employment opportunities, as well as skills development in economically promising sectors of construction and agriculture, and the private sector through small and medium size

enterprises.

"Germany and KfW have long been key partners of UNDP Iraq. We are grateful for this continued commitment to building peace and stability for communities in Iraq – particularly the most vulnerable. The onset of COVID-19 has exacerbated Iraq's economic crisis and increased unemployment rates, especially for the most vulnerable Iraqis. Germany's renewed support will enhance economic empowerment within the community, leading to a greater sense of inclusion, especially among young people and women," said the UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad. Germany's Ambassador in Baghdad, H. E.

Dr. Ole Diehl, stresses the importance of the measures taken: "The COVID-Pandemic has hit the Iraqi population hard. But its socio-economic consequences will be much worse if we do not act immediately. People need a roof over their head and a job to put food on their tables. Germany stands at their side to help build financial resilience."

"The social and economic challenges Iraq is facing have been exacerbated by the pandemic and KfW on behalf of the German government is pleased to support Iraq in its efforts to cope with these tremendous challenges. In providing financing for BREP we will contribute to strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities by enhancing their economic empowerment," said Dr. Anna Janke, Country Director of KfW Office in Iraq. Under the project, UNDP supports vulnerable Iraqis to build back better and recover from the economic shock of the COVID-19 crisis, and improve income security, productivity and socioeconomic inclusion of vulnerable populations. The project will contribute significantly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).



UN-Habitat Iraq has completed this month a community water infrastructure project in Mamzawa and Qatawi neighborhoods

Baghdad 24 December 2020 - UN-Habitat Iraq has completed this month a community water infrastructure



project in the underserved Mamzawa and Qatawi neighborhoods, where a new water well has been constructed to serve both areas and 375 houses have been connected to the water network. The project is part of the programme “Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in Countries Affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises-Headway EU Madad Fund”, funded by the EU and implemented in partnership with UNDP.

“Previously, getting water on daily basis was very difficult and we were paying lots of money to do that. We needed 1 to 2 tanks per day for the two

families of 21 members living in the same house and each tank costed 5,000 Iraqi Dinars. We now have daily access to the water supply thanks to UN-Habitat’s initiatives in our neighborhood”, Maather Daly Ibrahim said. Maather and her family were displaced from Anbar Governorate and is renting a house in Mamzawa neighborhood, Erbil Governorate.

Through the same programme, UN-Habitat is rehabilitating 200 houses resided by internally displaced persons, refugees and host community members in both neighborhoods, including the house rented by Maather and her two families.

Germany helps WFP respond to families’ needs across Iraq

Baghdad, 31 December 2020 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has received a Euro 21 million contribution from the Federal Government of Germany to support vulnerable families across Iraq as well as the digitalisation and reform of the country’s national Public Distribution System (PDS) for food rations.

The contribution is part of Germany’s new multi-year commitment to WFP’s work in Iraq which allows for strong forward-planning to better meet people’s needs following conflict, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. While millions of displaced families in Iraq have been able to return to their places of origin, food security remains difficult not only for the remaining 1.3 million internally displaced persons and 242,000 refugees in the country, but also for a substantial part of the Iraqi population. “At this time of COVID-19 and the resulting economic crisis, access to

sufficient food and nutrients is an increasing challenge,” said German Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq Ole Diehl. “Germany is glad to provide 21 million euros in 2020 to WFP to address these needs. Our funding goes towards life-saving, humanitarian activities such as food assistance, as well as towards strengthening the resilience of a substantial part of the Iraqi population in the long run, for example through the innovative approach of digitalising the PDS – Iraq’s largest social protection system. With its strong track record, WFP has proven a reliable partner of the Federal Government of Germany and we look forward to continuing our cooperation.” The contribution is helping WFP support diverse groups encompassing displaced families, refugees and host communities through food assistance for vulnerable households and job creation initiatives across the country. Initiatives include the award-winning

EMPACT “Empowerment in Action” programme for youth.

“We are thankful for Germany’s multi-year commitment to WFP Iraq, spanning up to 2023,” said WFP Representative Abdirahman Meygag. “Germany’s commitment enables WFP to save lives and change lives in Iraq through a holistic approach, from relief and recovery to building people’s resilience as they return to their areas following conflict. Also, this support goes towards WFP’s work with the Ministry of Trade to reform the PDS social protection programme for all families benefiting from it.”

In 2020, WFP launched new resilience activities in southern Iraq, for some of the most vulnerable communities. Germany’s support across the entire country is helping to mitigate the socio-economic effects of the global pandemic on the most vulnerable.



Security Sector Reform

Transparency, accountability, integrity: New agreement to help combat corruption in Iraq

Baghdad, 9 December 2020 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Iraqi Prime Minister's Office have reaffirmed their partnership and commitment to preventing and combating corruption in Iraq by signing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) designed to promote transparency, accountability and integrity in the public and private

sectors.

Signed on the International Anti-Corruption Day, the MoU builds on UNDP’s efforts in supporting a robust anti-corruption reform agenda in Iraq in conjunction with key Governmental and non-governmental institutions at both the Federal level and within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

“We are pleased to continue working

together to strengthen the bonds of partnership and cooperation between the Iraqi Government and the United Nations Development Programme, in Iraq, in the areas of supporting sustainable development, achieving transparency and integrity, combating poverty and corruption, and strengthening the role of women, youth and civil society institutions,” says H.E

Transparency, accountability, integrity: New agreement to help combat corruption in Iraq *(continued)*

Judge Raid Johi, Chief of Staff, Prime Minister's Office.

“We are proud to work alongside the Prime Minister's Office and other key partners to deliver a sound anti-corruption agenda for Iraq - one that will help improve public services, reduce inequalities, strengthen rule of law, create a more resilient society, and

rebuild trust between Iraqi citizens and public institutions,” added Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

Since 2012, UNDP has worked with the Iraqi institutions to combat the country's corruption issues. Currently, UNDP is implementing the Anti-Corruption for Trust in Iraq project

which provides support for the development of strategies, policies, regulatory frameworks, and legislations on preventing corruption, and better equips public institutions and NGOs to implement anti-corruption reforms and activities.

COVID-19 Pandemic

WHO makes valiant efforts to upgrade community awareness to fighting COVID-19 in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 8 November 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in partnership with the Ministry of Health of Kurdistan Region of Iraq launched a COVID-19 prevention and awareness-raising campaign to halt the recent surge in numbers of COVID-19 cases in the Region governorates of Erbil and Duhok.

The campaign, the 5th in Iraq, targets a community of approximately 4 million people in the two mentioned governorates with prevention and infection control messages stressing the importance of mask-wearing, proper hand hygiene, and physical distancing among individuals in all settings.

“The community has to be aware of its responsibility and capability to contain the spread of the virus and control the level of infection in their towns and cities to protect their families and loved ones,” said Dr. Adham Ismail WHO

Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

“WHO and local health authorities are now more concerned than before as the recent resurgence of the virus worldwide requires quick actions towards raising the community awareness and educating them to change certain behavioural practices that negatively impact their health and expose them to infection” Dr. Ismail added.

The campaign will start its one-week activities in Erbil Governorate and proceed to Duhok afterward for another week of activities. Over 20 carefully selected sites including refugees and internally displaced population camps in both governorates will also be covered.

Moreover, more than 150 volunteers were trained and mobilized to deliver a package of supplies containing masks, educational items like flyers, banners,

posters, and other visuals of a wide variety of preventive messages on home and hospital care measures, MythBusters, and many others.

Mobile booths at public places entrances, mobile medical clinics touring markets and heavily populated areas, in addition to movable screens showing WHO educational videos have also been utilized to ensure reaching all target populations in pre-identified areas.

The World Health Organization in Iraq would like to extend its gratitude to donors' contributions which supported the organization to implement a broad scale of awareness activities in almost all Iraqi governorates. This 5th COVID-19 prevention and awareness-raising campaign has been implemented with support from the People and Government of Germany.

COVID-19's impact on Social Cohesion in Iraq cannot be ignored in recovery efforts: New report

Baghdad, 15 November 2020 – The impact of COVID-19 on social cohesion in Iraq represents yet another challenge faced by communities across the country and must be addressed to ensure Iraq's full recovery from the pandemic, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The policy paper is the third in a series released by UNDP Iraq on the impact of COVID-19 in Iraq. Building on the first two reports, the Impact of COVID-19 and the Oil Crisis on Iraq's Fragility, and the Impact of COVID-19 on the Iraqi Economy The Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Iraq notes COVID-19's exacerbation of existing and sometimes deeply rooted

political, economic, social and security challenges, highlighting its resulting impact on the country's diverse social fabric.

“Social cohesion is critical to achieving our central objective of leaving no one behind,” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“While the Iraqi Government is wholly committed to improving social cohesion in Iraq, the challenges remain significant, with COVID-19 adding to already complex social dynamics in and between communities.

“Scaling-up confidence-building measures, while tackling the pandemic, remains an enormous challenge, and this report makes policy recommendations to help the Government and other stakeholders effectively plan for Iraq's recovery. Strengthening the social contract

between citizens and the State should be the baseline for Iraq's recovery, and UNDP Iraq stands ready to support this effort,” adds Ms. Ali Ahmad.

Additional thematic policy papers will be released in the coming months focusing on the implications of the pandemic on social protection, environmental sustainability and the socioeconomic fallout on vulnerable households.

UNDP Iraq is grateful to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq for its collaboration on The Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Iraq. Read the paper at

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/Stabilization/impact-of-covid-19-on-social-cohesion-in-iraq.html>

Using technology to overcome the challenges caused by COVID-19: UNFPA conducts its first donor virtual visit

Baghdad, 17 November 2020 - As COVID-19 infection rates continue to be at high levels across the country, the continuation of services to the vulnerable populations remains a priority to UNFPA. To ensure these services are of quality and meet the needs of women and girls, UNFPA conducted a virtual monitoring visit to the women centre and reproductive health clinic it supports in Barhika camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The visit, the first of its kind, included representatives of UNFPA biggest donors; Canada, Australia, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), with UNFPA programme teams and implementing partners Zhian Health Organization and Al Mesalla Organization for Human Resource Development.

Through a Zoom connection, donors were able to tour the two facilities and interact with both the service providers working at these facilities and women receiving services.

The service providers briefed on service

delivery amid the COVID-19 outbreak, including the COVID-19 prevention measures taken at the facilities and awareness campaigns conducted in the camp.

Chairing the visit, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni, Deputy Representative of UNFPA in Iraq, said: "We are happy to be able to use technology to reassure donors that despite the COVID-19 challenges, UNFPA is still putting women and girls at the top of the priorities. We are grateful to our donors for their trust in UNFPA that enabled us to serve the most vulnerable women and girls during this difficult time. We appreciate our implementing partners for their devotion and we highly appreciate the resilience of women and girls not only in this camp but across Iraq.

At the end of the visit, the donor representatives commented: "We appreciate innovation in these unprecedented time to ensure we continue to hear directly from the implementing partners and from the women who receive assistance from

UNFPA. It is vital to understand the value and quality of the services they receive and to see first hand the difference it makes to their lives."

"As soon as the services [at the centre] resumed, my neighbour and I immediately attended the first session. We were a little hesitant at first because of COVID-19 but we were also tired of staying home all the time. The social workers gave us masks and hygiene kits when we arrived and explained to us how we can protect ourselves and loved one," said one of the women at the women's centre to the virtual delegation.



WHO Iraq concludes a 2-week COVID19 prevention and awareness campaign in Kurdistan Region, Iraq



Erbil, 18 November 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) in partnership with the Ministry of Health of Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) concluded in Duhok today the 2-week COVID19 prevention and awareness campaign which started in Erbil on 7 of the current month.

The campaign targeted a population of approximately 4 million people including the refugees and internally displaced population (IDPs) in the KR-I. It also engaged the community through the mobilization of more than 300 volunteers deployed to serve 20 sites in the governorates of Erbil and Duhok.

"The recent resurgence of the virus worldwide scaled up the challenge for WHO and the health authorities in Iraq; and until a treatment or a vaccine is globally introduced, we will have to maintain our collaboration and joint action to control the spread of the pandemic and raise the community awareness on the importance of mask-wearing, physical distancing, and good hygiene practices," said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

"We urge all brothers and sisters in Kurdistan Region and Iraq at large to protect themselves and their families against this disease and try to regain their normal life activities," Dr. Ismail added.

The campaign activities in Duhok was mapped out in close coordination with the Duhok Directorate of Health. Ten sites were jointly selected for awareness and prevention messages including the four IDP camps of Koberto 1 & 2, Khanki, and Shariya where over 56,000 vulnerable people are still accommodated with limited health care services.

"Duhok Directorate of Health extends its thanks to WHO for their efforts to

conduct this campaign in Duhok," said Dr. Nezar Ismet, Director General of Duhok DOH. "The health directorate has taken a series of COVID19 preventive measures in the governorate but we look forward to further collaboration with health partners like WHO to contain the infection and increase people's awareness of and commitment to health recommendations," he added.

The community engagement has achieved its role with the mobilized volunteers going tent to tent in IDP camps and visiting public places, markets, family parks, and heavily populated areas to educate Duhok population on major preventive measures focusing on wearing masks at all times, maintaining social distance everywhere possible, and keeping hands clean by washing them with clean water and soap for no less than 30 seconds.

WHO would like to renew its appreciation to the people and government of Germany for supporting the campaign which has been implemented by WHO implementing partner the United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS).

Raising awareness session held in Al Sharia camp

Duhok, 19 November 2020 – The Baghdad Women Association, in partnership with UN Women in Iraq and Finland funding, has organized a number of awareness sessions on the Impact of COVID-19 for 70 women and girls in Al Sharia camp in Dohuk Governorate in the Kurdistan Region. The overall goal is to raise the

awareness of women and girls of GBV on Covid-19 and sharing the experiences and challenges that they had during the pandemic. They recommended to conduct such sessions through field visits for the women who are unable to reach the center due to their family commitments and responsibilities.



UNFPA delivers the fourth shipment of personal protective equipment to the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan Region



Erbil, 19 November 2020 - During disease outbreaks, women face a variety of risks, yet they are too often absent in the design of pandemic responses. This has been true in the COVID-19 experience thus far and with high numbers of COVID-19 cases on daily basis, the health system in the Kurdistan region of Iraq has been burdened and the resources are being exhausted fast.

UNFPA is working with the Kurdistan Regional Government to strengthen the capacity of their health systems, to

procure and deliver essential medical supplies, to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, and to promote risk communication and community engagement.

On 18 November, UNFPA Deputy Representative, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni, delivered the fourth shipment of personal protective equipment to the Minister of Health in the Kurdistan Region, Dr Saman Barzanji, in presence of the member of the Kurdish Parliament Health Committee, Mr Zana Mala Khalid. PPEs worth US\$226,007 have been delivered to the Ministry so far. These PPEs include coveralls, long-sleeve gowns, face shields, eye goggles, aprons, head covers, and shoe covers to front-line health workers.

The delivery of shipment was preceded with a meeting between the UNFPA Delegation, Minister Barzanji and Mr Khalid where discussions focused on the strengthening of capacities of the

Ministry of health staff in the governmental maternal hospitals and the future potential projects between the Ministry and UNFPA in related to the maternal services in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

During the meeting, the Minister expressed this appreciation to UNFPA support to the Ministry of Health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and he emphasised the importance of the role the Fund played during the humanitarian crises in the last few years.

For his part, Mr Abdulmoghni reiterated that UNFPA was proud to consider itself partners with the Kurdistan Regional Government in fighting COVID-19 and to front-line health workers who are dedicated to saving lives. "UNFPA will continue to advocate with national and local authorities to ensure that the response to women needs, including that of female health workers, is prioritised," he concluded.

Raising COVID-19 awareness at the airport points of entry

Baghdad, 19 November 2020 - Lengthy and porous borders compound the challenge of managing risks associated with human mobility during outbreaks. As IOM continues to support the Government of Iraq's fight against COVID19, points of entry will be crucial areas of focus for improved

detection, reporting and management of infectious diseases. Earlier this month, IOM Iraq's Migration Health Unit has delivered roll up banners to authorities at Baghdad International Airport with information for travellers' awareness of new health and safety measures, and floor stickers to guide social distancing.

On 16 November, IOM Iraq delivered 68 roll-up banners to Erbil International Airport as part of efforts to support the Government of Iraq at points of entry (PoEs), including increased passenger awareness of COVID-19 preventive measures and guidance when traveling both domestically and internationally.

The activity is part of a broader project to support the government in strengthening International Health Regulation (IHR) implementation and reinforcing public health capacities at

PoEs. IOM Iraq's Migration Health Unit has selected Baghdad International Airport, Erbil International Airport, and Haj Omran border crossing for these initial activities.

These activities were funded by the Government of Denmark.



New €10m contribution from Germany expands UNDP Iraq's Coronavirus response into 15 governorates

Baghdad, 22 November 2020 – German Government's KfW Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Government of Iraq, have today signed a EUR 10 million agreement (US\$11.75 million) to support Iraq's response to COVID-19. The contribution was made by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with financing provided through KfW. Over the past five years the German Government has been a continuous supporter of UNDP activities in Iraq and committed so far more than EUR 300 million through KfW Development Bank for this purpose.

The German Government also supports Iraq in its efforts to address the immediate and medium-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and has set up an emergency window under which funds are provided, including this contribution to UNDP. This contribution allows UNDP to extend its COVID-19 response measures into 15 governorates. It makes Germany the tenth partner to contribute to UNDP's COVID-19 response, taking the total raised to approximately \$38.9 million.

Measures under UNDP Iraq's response include increasing the testing capacity of

laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, building isolation units for infected patients and undertaking assessments to drive post-COVID-19 recovery strategies.

"The spread of COVID-19 is still taking its toll on Iraqi communities across the country. Thanks to Germany's generous contribution, we can continue boosting Iraq's health infrastructure by constructing an extra three isolation wards in addition to the 13 that have either been completed or are underway," says Resident Representatives of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

H. E. the German Ambassador, Dr. Ole Diehl, especially emphasizes the multi-faceted approach of UNDP's COVID-19 response measure. "COVID-19 is a catastrophe, not only insofar as it destroys human health and lives. It also causes people to lose their jobs, enterprises to lose their revenue and families to literally lose the food on their table. These possible outcomes of COVID-19 require a strong and differentiated response mirrored in this program. Germany continues to support Iraq in its fight against COVID-19. This is why we have launched an extensive global COVID-19 emergency program, under which also a sizeable COVID-19 response

window is allocated for Iraq. This pandemic can only be contained with the collective effort of the international community and Germany will play its part."

"Germany is one of UNDP Iraq's largest contributors, and we are extremely grateful for their strong and continued support, particularly during the pandemic," adds Ms Ali Ahmad.

KfW Development Bank and UNDP enjoy a strong cooperation over the years. "On behalf of the German Government, we are very pleased to further extend our cooperation with UNDP and assist Iraq in its efforts to address the current challenges arising through COVID-19," says Director of KfW Office Iraq, Dr. Anna Janke.

The contribution will be channeled through UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS).

Germany joins Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, and USAID as key partners supporting UNDP Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which supports medical facilities in Anbar, Babil, Basra, Dhi Qar, Diwaniya, Diyala, Duhok, Erbil, Karbala, Kirkuk, Maysan, Muthana, Najaf, Ninewa and Salah Al Din.

WHO Iraq conducts its community awareness-raising campaign to halt the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Mosul



Baghdad, 24 November 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health in Iraq has launched a new phase of the COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign in heavily populated and high-risk areas of Mosul, Ninewa governorate. The campaign aims at reminding the public of the importance of wearing face masks, physical distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene.

The campaign like the previous ones, is themed "Your Health is Important". More than one million people are being targeted in this round of the campaign, including refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in 10 locations of the governorate. The campaign will use one hundred fifty local volunteers

who will move door to door sensitizing communities on ways to stay safe from COVID-19 as well as disseminating community awareness materials. Through its implementing partner; namely, United Iraq Medical Society (UIMS), videos and audio messages will be broadcasted on booths, mobile screens and mobile clinics. The volunteers will also distribute face masks and hand sanitizers

According to Dr Adham Ismail, the WHO Representative in Iraq, the number of COVID-19 cases are likely to increase during the winter season, especially in the areas experiencing extreme cold temperatures such as Mosul and the neighboring governorates. Stressing the importance of the community responsibility and capability in containing the spread of the virus, Dr Adham said, "Controlling the level of infection in towns and cities to protect families and friends is essential. Citizens' awareness will ease the burden on health of high number of COVID-19 cases among health practitioners and authorities working day and night to confront the

pandemic". Dr Adham added "We witnessed an increase of 36% in COVID_19 cases in the governorate in the past week alone. Thus we call to expand the surveillances conducted by the Iraqi health departments".

Since July 2020, WHO is collaborating with the Federal Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan region, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Interior (represented by the Community Police) to conduct COVID-19 community awareness-raising campaigns in heavily populated areas and affected districts of several governorates in Iraq; namely, Baghdad, Sulymania, Basra, Wasit, Thi Qar, Misan, Hilla, Karbala, Erbil and Dohuk. So far, the campaign has reached millions of Iraqis with awareness and preventive materials. WHO will continue reaching out to communities thanks to our valuable donors (The European Union, as well as Governments of Germany, Kuwait, United Kingdom and France) who have helped the organization to reach out to the vulnerable and underserved communities in Iraq.

Germany supports efforts to curb COVID-19, contributes to economic recovery in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 December 2020 - The German Government, via KfW Development Bank, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have signed a new agreement to provide crucial funding for the national COVID-19 response in Iraq. KfW, on behalf of the German government, will support IOM Iraq's ongoing efforts to help communities prepare for and respond to COVID-19, and increase support to livelihoods and job creation. This contribution builds on the existing KfW-IOM partnership in Iraq, focused on economic recovery and sustainable job creation, which began in 2018.

The contribution was made available by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with financing provided through KfW. Since 2018, BMZ through KfW has committed EUR 36 million in support of IOM Iraq's activities to contribute to economic recovery by supporting job creation and the rehabilitation of key community infrastructure such as markets and industrial areas.

Access to economic opportunity in Iraq was a key challenge prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which employ a majority of Iraq's workers, were severely impacted by the conflict against ISIL. They were gradually recovering when the pandemic struck, further exacerbating vulnerabilities and increasing economic challenges for Iraqi businesses and their workers. These factors, combined with the global public health crisis and related economic

challenges, have dramatically increased the need for support to Iraqi workers and small businesses.

A recent joint study by IOM, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) showed that as of September 2020, Iraqi SMEs had suffered a nearly 53 per cent decline in production. Employment numbers at the time of the survey had also reduced, on average, by 27 per cent, including both terminated and furloughed employees.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has created a severe public health crisis as well as economic hardship, in a country already trying to recover from the conflict against ISIL," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "IOM has had a long-term partnership with the Government and is pleased to expand its support for the Iraqi population in light of these new challenges. IOM is also very grateful for Germany's continued support through KfW, and for the collaboration that has already yielded positive results."

The new agreement between KfW and IOM Iraq will provide supplementary financing to support SMEs and microenterprises that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, principally through the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) mechanism. IOM will also support individuals with trainings to enhance their employment potential and develop skills needed for the COVID-19 response. Additionally, the funding will allow IOM to implement cash-for-work (CfW) activities to contain the spread of COVID-19 at the

local level and provide rapid cash assistance to individuals in need. Finally, IOM will rehabilitate key community infrastructure and services such as water, sanitation and primary health care centres.

"On behalf of the German government, KfW is pleased to support Iraq in its efforts of coping with the social and economic challenges exacerbated through the pandemic in the immediate as well as the medium-term," said Dr. Anna Janke, Country Director of KfW Office in Iraq. "The additional financing provided through KfW under this partnership will supplement current activities and aim at reducing the negative economic effects and supporting the overall response to COVID-19."

Since December 2018, Germany and IOM Iraq have supported a total of 199 SMEs through EDF, leading to the creation of 1,037 jobs. A further 886 individuals received microenterprise support packages or vocational training, and 665 individuals have taken part in CfW activities aimed at improving their financial security.



WHO hands over essential health commodities to the Ministry of Health to contain COVID-19 in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 December 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) has today handed over essential medical supplies to the Iraqi Ministry of Health to strengthen its capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The supplies, which included personal protective equipment (PPEs) (58 800 were face shield, 9800 goggles protectives, 10 600 isolation gowns, and 28 000 N95 Face mask) - were handed over to the Ministry of Health by the WHO Country Representative in Iraq, Dr Adham Ismail.

"WHO's priority is to support the Iraqi health authorities to control the spread of COVID-19 among its population, including the most marginalized and vulnerable. By providing medical supplies, WHO commits to strengthening the health system by equipping health workers with lifesaving equipment," said Dr Adham. "December is a long holiday session for

many families, during which people travel to spend time together. This could be dangerous at this time of COVID-19, especially if none of the family members or friends know their infection status. At times like this, it is essential for health facilities to have the much needed medical supplies and PPEs to facilitate the work of health care providers while keeping them safe from COVID-19," added Dr Adham.

Currently, Iraq is facing a shortage of personal protective equipment amidst the increasing number of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Since Iraq recorded its COVID-19 first case in February 2020, the country has, to date, registered 577 363 cases with 511 639 recoveries and 12 614 deaths.

To date, WHO has provided diagnostic laboratory kits, personal protective equipment, medical equipment such as Test kits, Ventilators, Oxygen Concentrators, Electrocardiograph

(ECG machine), Patient Monitors, Defibrillator, Suction pump, medical furniture such as ICU hospital bed, health kits, and ambulances worth over USD 7 Million to the Ministry of Health as its contribution to the COVID-19 response at facility levels.

This support was made possible by the Government of Kuwait, the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID-OFDA), and the Government of Germany.



Restoration works in East Erbil Emergency Hospital complete and specialized services resumed before patients



Erbil, 24 November 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in partnership with the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region of Iraq today celebrated the completion of the renovation works at East Erbil Emergency Hospital in Erbil Governorate. The hospital is currently functioning as the main facility providing life-saving emergency services to a population of approximately 1 million people, including the refugees and internally displaced population accommodated in Erbil where other health facilities were converted to

manage COVID-19 patients.

“WHO Iraq has built a fruitful partnership with the health authorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq reflected through the series of construction and rehabilitation of health facilities in the Region,” said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

“The project we are jointly inaugurating its resumption of full capacity functions in Erbil today will support a large segment of the in-need population for essential and specialized health care services. We also believe the facility will considerably fill the gap created by the designation of the majority of health facilities in the KR-I to COVID 19 treatment,” Dr. Ismail added.

Like the rest of the World, the emergence of the new SARS Cov 2 has overwhelmed the health system in Iraq in general and Kurdistan Region in particular due to the presence of hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs who are residing in the region. This, coupled with the growing needs for advanced health care services, has necessitated the mobilization of all efforts and resources to continue

improving the existing health facilities functionally and structurally.

The hospital restoration project supported by WHO with funds from the US Department of States’ Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) aimed to rehabilitate selected departments in the facility according to international standards and in line with the approved medical protocols to provide the best quality services.

The hospital in-patient wards and intensive care units were refurbished and a total of 57 horizontal bed head units with related furniture, equipment, and accessories like the oxygen system pipeline, medical gas, and suction system, were installed to upgrade its capacity to accommodate about 1000 outpatients and 60 in-patient cases daily.

The World Health Organization would like to thank the US Department of States’ Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) for their contribution in supporting the works of renovation and to Heevi local implementing partner for carrying out the restoration works.

More than 1.9 million Iraqi children in high risk governorates to be vaccinated against polio

Baghdad, 30 November 2020 – On Sunday, Iraqi health authorities, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF began a mass polio vaccination campaign targeting more than 1.9 million children under the age of five.

The campaign will be conducted in locations across Iraq, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which, like previous disease outbreaks and humanitarian emergencies has disrupted access to essential health services, including routine immunization. The campaign is urgent because even brief interruptions of vaccination programmes leave cohorts of infants unprotected, making outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, like polio and measles more likely.

“The complexity of ensuring that children in Iraq remain safe from vaccine-preventable diseases while at the same time responding to COVID-19 is enormous, but we must continue to do all that we can to protect children against avoidable suffering and death caused by vaccine-preventable disease. WHO and its partners are working past the COVID-19 challenges by ensuring continuity of vaccination efforts against childhood threats such as polio” said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative for Iraq.

“The Oral polio vaccine will be safely delivered both door to door and at fixed points in health facilities to ensure that we reach all children under the age of five

regardless of their previous vaccination status. We want to make sure that no child is left behind, no matter where they are,” added Dr Adham.

WHO supported the development of micro plans to guide vaccination teams day by day, mobilized and trained 862 supervisors and more than 4294 vaccinators to carry out the campaign. In addition, it is also paying all the vaccination costs including transportation and other incentives to ensure that all children are reached.

In order to ensure that the appropriate precautions are taken to maintain COVID-19 infection prevention and control (IPC) during the campaign, UNICEF trained all vaccinators in IPC skills and equipped many of them with personal protective equipment in order to ensure their safety and the safety of the target communities.

In addition, UNICEF donated the entire stock of polio vaccines for the campaign and has provided the equipment needed to keep vaccine doses at the right temperature, thereby ensuring their effectiveness. It also developed educational materials such as informational videos and posters, to raise awareness about the importance of immunization and encourage caregivers to vaccinate children. In addition, UNICEF trained 400 community volunteers to raise awareness, track rumours, and counter misinformation with accurate information about the vaccine and its benefits.



“Along with our partners in government, we have a responsibility to make sure that communities are engaged, aware that vaccines are the most cost-effective and safe way of protecting children against many diseases, and that they are mobilized to participate in vaccine delivery programmes. Every child born has a right to a healthy life,” explained Ms Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF’s Representative in Iraq.

The five-day campaign will target children in 46 districts in sixteen governorates, including Baghdad (Baghdad-Resafa and Baghdad-Karkh), Babylon, Anbar, Dahuk, Erbil, Kerbala, Kirkuk Missan, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Najaf, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Suleymaniya, Wassit and Basra. The locations were selected based on the health risks of children in each, polio surveillance indicators, children’s immunisation profiles and existing gaps. Other factors considered included the population numbers, geography and environmental risks.

More support needed for community-based mental health in Iraq: prioritizing the transition from psychiatric hospital-based to community-based mental health services



Baghdad, 15 November 2020 -

Around one in ten persons, approximately 792 million people globally, have a mental or substance use disorder, contributing 10% of the disease's global burden. In Iraq, the demand for mental services is on the rise amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and remains one of the top priority areas that require continued support.

Al-Rashad Psychiatric Hospital is the largest mental health facility in Iraq. It consists of 24 wards and is a long-stay residential facility. Despite its overall capacity of 1200 beds, Al-Rashad Psychiatric Hospital is currently accommodating more than 1440 people. According to the hospital manager, Dr. Ali Rasheed Al-Rikabi, after admission, except for patients in the forensic unit, the rest of hospital admissions are lifelong and are never discharged.

Mr Karim, 62-years old, has been living in the hospital for 38 years. Even though his recovery and clinical conditions do not justify his admission to a mental health facility, Karim is still hospitalized. The long-lasting admissions and the lack of community-based mental health services contribute to the nearly non-existent social reintegration of people with mental disorders that are admitted at the hospital, like Mr. Karim.

Karim is not alone; several other people like him whose mental health status have improved are still living at this hospital. This because they either have no place to go back to or their families cannot take them because of limited space in their houses or fear of the unknown.

Khudhair Abbas Mohammed Ali, 59 years, has been in and out Al-Rashad Hospital since 1981. It is now 17 years since his re-admission to this facility.

But he has not seen any of his relatives for the past several months. Like Karim, he looks forward to getting out of the mental health facility and living everyday life.

"I was born in Baghdad, and it's good to get out there again. I miss my relatives, I have three sisters and brothers, but it has been several months since they came to see me. My nephew used to visit me, but he suddenly stopped. I miss my family so much. Help me to get access to them," said Mohammed.

"At this facility, I support my mates, I shave their hair and give talks on mental health, and when there is a medical emergency, I go out of my way to inform the hospital authorities. I can do a lot more when I get out there," added Mohammed.

According to Dr. Ali Rasheed Al-Rikabi, many people currently admitted at the hospital do not have clinical reasons to be hospitalized. They are clinically fully recuperated and should leave the facility. However, due to insufficient implementation of community-based mental health facilities, the support provided to people with mental conditions and their family members, along with the lack of housing, bars them from reintegrating into the community. The hospital manager recommends implementing a deinstitutionalization strategy to reduce the volume and role of psychiatric hospitals in favor of community-based mental health networks.

A model that WHO agrees to: "Looking at the state of many people suffering from mental disorders, WHO will advocate for the MOH to include a robust deinstitutionalization component in the National Mental Health Strategy," said Dr Adham

Ismail, the WHO Country Representative for Iraq.

"We will reach out to health authorities in Iraq and donors to recommend support," saddedDr Adham

WHO also recommends that the Ministry of Health collaborate with mental health partners and implement the WHO Quality Rights Initiative , which aims to improve access to quality mental health and social services and promote the rights of people with mental health conditions, psychosocial, intellectual and cognitive disabilities.

Over the past years, WHO has worked closely with the Ministry of Health to strengthen mental health at the national and governorate levels through capacity building and mental health supplies like medicines. WHO advocates for developing and strengthening mental health services that are community-based and human rights-oriented.

Iraq has gone through the COVID-19 restrictions on movement, incidents of gender-based violence, child abuse, and domestic violence; however, there is a minimal increase in the number of residents in Al-Rashad Hospital due to the ongoing pandemic. To date, the hospital has recorded 32 COVID-19 positive cases among people with mental health illness in the health facility.

WHO appeals to donors to support mental health interventions in Iraq, especially at this period, where many people are suffering from consequences of COVID-19 and where war and economic strains have negatively impacted mental health. WHO also advocates for more support in strengthening community-based management of mental health and establishing residential facilities, aware that mental health programs are underfunded not only in Iraq but globally.



National Suicide Prevention conference held in Iraq

Baghdad, 25 November 2020 - On November 24-25 IOM Iraq, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, held the National Suicide Prevention conference in Iraq.

The event was attended by Directors General and senior officials from several Government ministries and representatives of civil society organization working in the field of

suicide prevention and response. Participants discussed the necessary structures and coordination mechanisms to combat suicide and prepare for the launch of the Iraqi National Suicide Prevention Strategy and its workplan, with support from IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programme. This workshop is supported by the Government of Germany.



IOM raises awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and well-being



Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - "Move for Mental Health: Let's Invest" was the theme for World Mental Health Day 2020. IOM Iraq's team in Sinjar took the advice to heart, seizing the occasion to raise awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and well-being. The team reached out to 59 families and provided them with information to protect themselves and support at one another through the pandemic — when opportunities for

interaction and group activities are limited. During the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team in Sinjar has developed tools for remote support and counselling, to continue providing these services throughout lockdown.

These services are funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.

Individual mental health and psycho-social support was provided by Yazda and IOM Iraq's psychologists and psychosocial workers during the resumption of exhumation of mass graves in Kojo and Solagh

Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - In late October, the Government of Iraq resumed exhumation of mass graves in Kojo and Solagh, Ninewa Governorate, with support from UNITAD Iraq and the International Commission on Missing Persons - ICMP.

Prior to this event, IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team, in collaboration with Yazda, arranged focus group discussions with different members of the community to discuss their expectations and needs, as well as to prepare them for a significant, emotional event.

Exhumations are painful processes that

are likely to trigger a wide range of difficult emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness, or fear. Families from Solagh and Kojo districts, who lost relatives or friends during the 2014 crisis, are suffering from a particularly complicated sense of grief — the remains of their loved ones have not been recovered for proper burials, so they are unable to find proper closure. The chance to be engaged in the exhumation process, and hopefully the identification of their loved ones, can help alleviate the families' emotional burden.

IOM also conducted a training on psychological first aid to prepare staff

onsite to provide assistance to those who were overwhelmed or showing signs of distress during the exhumation.

Individual mental health and psychosocial support was provided by Yazda and IOM Iraq's psychologists and psychosocial workers during the event. IOM Iraq plans to follow up with some of the participants to be able to understand their impressions, and to address any form of emerging distress that could arise in the aftermath of the process.

These MHPSS activities are funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.

The increasing number of suicide cases in Iraq worries public health experts amidst COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 06 December 2020 - The growing number of suicide cases in Iraq over the past years is a worrying public health concern that can no longer be ignored. If not addressed, it will keep taking a heavy toll on individuals and communities in the country.

Over 590 people died in 2019 due to suicide, and 1112 attempted it in Iraq; 80% of them were women which translates to an average of one death per day due to suicide, and three people per day to have attempted suicide. The number of suicide cases reported in

2019 is higher than those reported in 2018 (519) and 2017 (422). It's important to note that although suicide is tragic, it is often preventable. Knowing the causes for suicide and who is at risk can help reduce the mortality. WHO acknowledges suicide as a public

The increasing number of suicide cases in Iraq worries public health experts amidst COVID-19 pandemic *(continued)*

health priority. Globally, 800,000 people die yearly due to suicide, and for every case, more than 20 others most likely attempt suicide. There is also one death recorded every 40 seconds globally due to suicide. WHO works with governments to increase the awareness of the public health significance of suicide and suicide attempts.

Suicide is one of the priority health conditions in the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP); this provides evidence-based technical guidance to scale up service provision and care in countries for mental, neurological, and substance use disorders. Everyone has a stake in helping communities to address suicide risk factors, including managing mental health conditions," said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Country Representative, Iraq.

"WHO is working with partners globally to make suicide prevention a high priority on the global public health agenda. In Iraq, we aim to encourage and support countries to develop or strengthen comprehensive suicide prevention strategies in a multi-sectoral public health approach and to strengthen mental health interventions

that constitute a bigger trigger for suicides", added Dr Adham.

Over several years, many Iraqi families have suffered with mental health scars caused by past conflicts and economic hostilities, as if this is not enough; many communities have also faced new stay-at-home restrictions or limited movements to curb the spread of COVID-19. This, public health experts say, raises concerns as it may increase suicide rates or associated risk factors, including social isolation, anxiety, fear of contagion, uncertainty, unemployment, chronic stress, and economic difficulties, which could worsen depression, anxiety, and substance. Other factors include barriers to access mental health services, depression, and insomnia among populations and some healthcare professionals.

Also, various factors could contribute to rates of suicide in Iraq, including intimate partner problems, physical health conditions, financial challenges, and legal issues. Others are personal or family experiences of violence, for instance, child abuse, neglect, or family history of suicide and broader community conditions, such as high crime rates and violence.

According to Dr Emad Abdulrazaq, the National Adviser for Mental Health at the Ministry of Health Iraq, a key component in suicide prevention in Iraq, is improving the accessibility of health services. "Through a multisectoral action, it is fundamental to build capacity, ensure quality of care of health services, increase awareness and advocacy on mental health and tackling stigma. A special focus needs to be put on high risk groups through early detection and appropriate management," said Emad.

To reduce suicides in the country during and after the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, WHO recommends that all partners supporting mental health interventions work with communities to provide adequate mental health services in the communities and decrease stress, anxiety, fears, and loneliness in the general population. WHO also recommends responsible media campaigns using traditional and social media to promote mental health and reduce distress need to be strengthened and conduct outreach, especially for people with a history of psychiatric disorders, COVID-19 survivors, and older adults.

IOM Iraq organized a training on suicide awareness and responsible journalistic reporting on suicide

Erbil 17 December 2020 - IOM Iraq organized a three-day training in Erbil on suicide awareness and responsible journalistic reporting on suicide, for journalists from different media organizations. The training was based on WHO's best practice guidelines and tailored to fit the local context by IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support team.

"Journalists can make a great impact in shaping the attitudes of individuals and communities towards important

issues like death by suicide and its impact on survivors. In this training, we taught them how to balance imperatives like the public's 'right to know' with the risk of causing harm, through insensitive reporting, to survivors and those who might be vulnerable to suicidal thoughts as well as society at large," said Sabah Abdulrahman, acting director of Azhee Foundation, a local NGO working on suicide prevention, and one of the trainers.

These trainings are supported by Auswärtiges Amt. IOM will organize similar sessions for journalists in Duhok as well..



Environment

Crude impact: cleaning up ravages of war in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 November 2020 - Each year, 06 November marks the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict. We report on one of the biggest challenges facing UNEP and its partners – the post-war clean-up of Iraq.

Vast jet-black plumes of smoke curling

upwards into the sky, blacking out the sun. Crude oil flowing through the streets. These were some of the environmental footprints left by ISIL/Da'esh (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in northern and western Iraq.

Oil wells and mineral stockpiles were torched, particularly during the Mosul

offensive in the spring of 2016. Water barrages were blown up. So thick were the clouds of smoke that for the inhabitants day became night.

This lasted for weeks. Locals dubbed it the "Da'esh winter" despite the sizzling mid-summer heat. Nowhere was this more visible than in Qayyarah, a town of about 25,000 inhabitants beside the

Crude impact: cleaning up ravages of war in Iraq *(continued)*

Tigris River, some 60 kilometres south of Mosul.

Four years later, residents continue to suffer. Slowly however, life is on the mend again. A clean-up of these oil-polluted areas is under way with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and partners.

“We must not forget that people continue to suffer from this pollution. We must not lose sight of how this fuels uncertainty and anxiety over their health and livelihoods. The environment has long been a silent victim of Iraq’s decades of conflict, and it is important that contaminated areas are cleaned up so that people can live in their homes in safety and dignity,” said the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano.

“UNEP is collaborating with Iraq’s

ministries of oil and environment, to trial a number of clean-up techniques on oil-contaminated sites,” said Inger Andersen, UNEP’s Executive Director. These techniques harness naturally-occurring soil bacteria as a powerful ally to decontaminate poisoned land.” Initial feedback from the environment ministry report a 77 percent success rate using such techniques.

While initially a substantial part of the oil had solidified, many of these spills became viscous and turned to liquid again under Iraq’s soaring summer temperatures which can reach well over 50 degrees Celsius.

Every subsequent year, this re-created large oil pools amid Qayyarah’s crowded neighbourhoods. People had no choice but to continue to farm and graze livestock on lands visibly contaminated with oil.

“The affordable bio-remediation solutions that we are rolling out in Iraq



to clean up the oil spills need to be massively scaled up, so that people living in polluted areas can rebuild and thrive,” said Inger Andersen.

Iraq’s Environment Ministry is also collaborating with oil companies to clean-up oil contaminated sites in three locations, including in the major oil producing regions of southern Iraq. It has also issued licenses to private companies to carryout bio-remediation work.

UNEP held a workshop of the Committee on Climate Change in the Kurdistan Region as part of the National Adaptation Plan

Erbil, 22 December 2020 – The United Nations Environment program (UNEP) in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Environment, held today a workshop of the Committee on Climate Change in the Kurdistan Region as part of the National Adaptation Plan. The workshop aimed to discuss the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan and its activities, as well as the exchange of data and information on the plan.



Culture



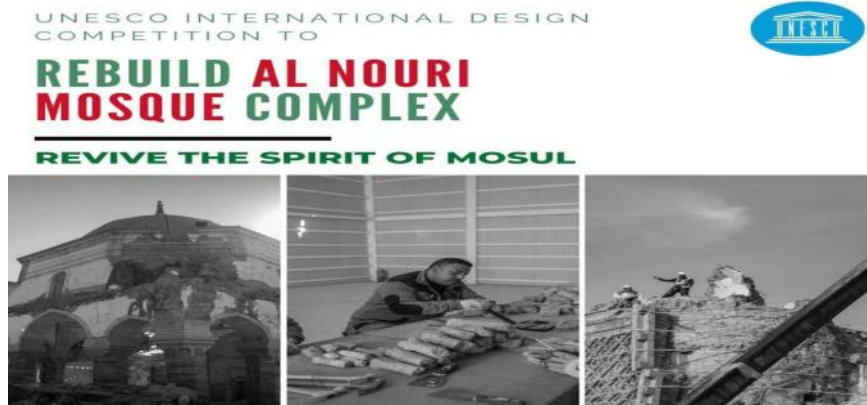
Erbil 7 November 2020 – During her recent visit to the Kurdistan Region, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with Mr. Nehad Latif Qoja, former Mayor of Erbil and Head of the High Commission for the Revitalization of Erbil Citadel. The Erbil Citadel, locally called Qelat, has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 21 June 2014.

Photos courtesy of the High Commission.



Mosul, 19 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSG and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, visited Al Tahira church and Al Nouri Mosque in the heart of Mosul’s old city. They also met with staff from UNESCO, which is involved in the reconstruction of Mosul’s cultural heritage.

Mosul rising: UNESCO launches an international architectural competition to rebuild Al-Nouri mosque



Paris, 17 November 2020 - UNESCO calls on talents around the world to participate in an exclusive International Architectural Competition for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex, funded by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in the Iraqi city of Mosul. Joining the initiative “Revive the spirit of Mosul” is a unique opportunity to change the lives of the people of Mosul and help them rebuild their city after Daesh’s occupation.

The competition calls for a conceptual design, which includes the conservation of the standing structures of the prayer hall and its integration into the new buildings, as well as the rehabilitation of some historical buildings and their integration into the new designs, including the landscaping design of the entire site. By creating new spaces dedicated to the community – for education, social and cultural activities - the project envisions a space to serve community in ways which go beyond its principal religious function.

The competition opens on 16 November. There will be an open call for proposals based on an anonymous design submission which is open until 26 March 2021. The winner will be announced next spring.

An international jury composed of 9

members and 2 alternate members will select the winning designer and the four runners-up. The jury and its alternate members, in alphabetical order, are: Ms. Howayda Al-Harithy (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Ahmed Yousef Al-Omari (Iraq), Ms. Raya Ani (Iraq), Mr. Xavier Casanovas (Spain), Ms. Amel Chabbi, (United Arab Emirates), Ms. Shahira Fahmy (Egypt), Mr. Dominique Perrault (France), Mr. Wang Shu, (China), Ms. Marina Tabassum (Bangladesh), Ms. Shadia Touqan, (Palestine), Mr. Jerzy Uścińowicz, (Poland).

A worldwide outreach campaign will invite architects, engineers and students from around the world to submit a design proposal for the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex. It is especially important to encourage the people of Iraq to participate in their own history-making and reconstruction.

“The reconstruction and rehabilitation of this important historical complex sends a strong signal of resilience and hope, as a first step towards social cohesion and reconciliation in post-conflict Iraq,” stated UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay. “Indeed, historical sites and monuments are powerful symbols of belonging, community, and identity, whose rehabilitation will facilitate

Moslawis in recovering their memory of their vibrant and emerging city”. Since its construction in the second half of the XII Century, The Al-Nouri complex has been a core site in the life and development of the city of Mosul.

“The launch of this architectural competition is an opportunity for world talents to participate in rebuilding the Al-Nouri Mosque and the Al Hadba minaret. This means restoring respect for Iraq’s heritage and more specifically, Mosul’s heritage,” said the Minister of Culture of Iraq, Hasan Nadhem. “It is about rebuilding the people’s memory and restoring the damage that Da’esh left behind.”

“The International Architectural Design Project Competition for the design of the Al Nouri mosque complex was born out of our firm belief that a project of this importance must ensure wider community participation,” said UAE’s Minister of Culture and Youth, Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi. “Al Nouri mosque and its magnificent Al Hadba minaret embody the civilizational essence of Mosul and Iraq. As a witness the rich history of Mosul, this place of worship represents values and principles that define us as human beings.”

“Rebuilding Al-Nouri Mosque and its minaret is more than about rebuilding stones,” said the President of the Sunni Waqf of Iraq, Saad Kambash. “It is about telling the story of all the people who defied death to give space for hope and let humanity live on”.

Beyond the restoration and reconstruction of historical landmarks, the initiative includes:

- The rehabilitation of historical fabric of the Old city of Mosul
- The revival of the city’s cultural life
- Strengthening the educational system and ensuring quality education for all.

Erbil Citadel reopened for visitors

Erbil, 10 December 2020 - UNESCO in collaboration with the High Commission for the Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR) reopened the site for public visitors. This effort comes within the framework of the project, “Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development”, funded by the European

Union.

The Erbil Citadel closed in the middle of March 2020 due to the lockdown imposed by COVID-19 and precautionary steps were taken by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq in response to the pandemic.





Baghdad, 3 December 2020 - UNESCO Director in Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani, discussed today with the Director of The Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Dr. Laith Hussein, the mechanisms of work and implementation of projects in the archeology and heritage sector. Mr. Fontani toured the National Museum of Iraq and viewed the various archaeological exhibits that represent Mesopotamian civilization and expressed his great admiration for the exhibits in the Iraqi museum galleries.



Mosul, 7 December 2020 - During the event that was held at Al-Nouri Mosque yesterday, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani, discussed with Dr. Hussam Rashid, an Architect from Mosul, future joint activities for Moslawi architects and engineers where the topic of reconstruction and rehabilitation in Mosul will be discussed.

UNESCO and the SBAH have begun stabilization measures on the historic Sulaiman Al Saigh house and Zyada house in Mosul

Mosul, 15 December 2020 - UNESCO and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Mosul have begun stabilization measures on the historic Sulaiman Al Saigh house and Zyada house in Mosul as part of an EU funded project to conserve, safeguard and reconstruct heritage houses and buildings in Mosul and within the framework of UNESCO’s Revive the Spirit of Mosul Initiative. The EU supported project for the Old City includes the reconstruction of a combination of public and private houses, schools, and public buildings of heritage value.

Fadhel Mohammed Khuder, Head of the Supervision and Follow-up Committee, SBAH, said “we are currently undertaking the delicate task of stabilizing the two houses”. A representative from AMAC – rubble removal added, “we are pleased to be undertaking this important work. It

gives companies and workers in Mosul a chance to participate in the important step to rebuild our city, building by building and house by house”.

UNESCO Engineer, Omar Alswaff said, “I’m really pleased to be working for UNESCO on this project. The two houses have unique characteristics that demonstrate the architectural and artistic traditions of our city. We are currently working on around 50 other houses in Mosul on this UNESCO / EU

project, each one preserving a part of our cultural traditions that were damaged by the conflict”

The purpose of the project is to promote livelihood opportunities for youth in Iraq and in particular among the communities of the Old City of Mosul and Basra, to contribute to the restoration of the historic urban landscape while contributing to social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation.



Education

Back-to-Learning campaign launched in the Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 28 October 2020 - UNICEF and partners including the Ministry of Education, launched the Back-to-Learning campaign which will enroll 10,000 out-of-school children who dropped-out or missed out on school in the Kurdistan Region.

To achieve this 126 young volunteer community mobilizers have been trained to identify out-of-school children and help them to access education and continue learning.



UNICEF and WFP signed a landmark joint work plan for Iraq

Baghdad, 2 November 2020 - Bringing together expertise and support to improve education and learning, nutrition and health especially for school age children, UNICEF Representative, Ms Hamida Lasseko and WFP Representative, Abdirahman Meygag signed a landmark Joint Work Plan.

The joint approach aims to enhance the overall wellbeing of school children in Iraq.



The third meeting of the Education Sector Coordination Group took place in Baghdad

Baghdad, 11 November 2020 - The third meeting of the Education Sector Coordination Group took place today in Baghdad to lead the coordination of the Government of Iraq's education programme and to ensure the support of donors and partners. The Secretariat of the Group is managed by UNICEF. The Group is chaired by the Deputy Minister for Education and the Deputy Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research and Co-chaired by the European Union. The meeting discussed the Iraqi National Education Strategy, educational response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition from a humanitarian to development

focus on education. International partners in attendance, both virtually and in person, included

UNESCO, the World Bank, the British Council and the World Food Programme.



UNESCO delivers Competency Based Training (CBT) for the Mosul Vocational Training Center

Mosul, 27 November 2020 - UNESCO is delivering a six days Competency-Based Training and Assessment to the 25 technical staff (3 women) of Vocational Training Centre (VTC) of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA) in the city of Mosul from 21 – 26 November 2020. The CBT training will build the technical and professional capacities of the staff of VTCs and DoLSA in Mosul to apply international best practices in their vocational training programmes with a focus on developing skills of graduates to benefit from employment opportunities. This is part of UNESCO's ongoing efforts to support for creation of "Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in construction skills supporting labour market outcomes" and "Job Creation for Youth in Mosul", with financial support of the Government of Japan.

Mr. Paolo Fontani, Director of UNESCO Iraq, thanked the Government authorities and the Government of Japan for the partnership and support, highlighting the potential impact of the project in responding to the urgent need of creating job opportunities for youth, and towards the revival of the spirit of Mosul.

Ms. Mithaq Taleb Yousef, the Director of Labor and Vocational Training Department of Nineveh marked that "The training course will contribute in developing the skills and abilities of the employees working in VTC in Mosul in terms of teaching and technology, especially in the application of CBT methodology in the Iraqi context". Ms. Yousef thanked UNESCO for the technical expertise and international best practices for the development, quality assurance and evaluation of TVET in Iraq, and capacity strengthening to improve the performance of VTCs. Ms. Yousef expressed confidence that this support will contribute in VTC to become a Centre of Vocational Excellence to meet the skills needs of the labour market in the field of construction, especially in the current stage of the reconstruction of Mosul."

Mr. Santosh Khatri, Chief of Education, UNESCO Iraq Office, highlighted the importance of this training in enhancing the technical and professional expertise of trainers in competency based training approaches, enabling them to be the 'TVET CBT approaches Champions' to deliver competency-based trainings in the future.

Mr. Khatri also mentioned that along with the CBT approaches, UNESCO is also supporting quality assurance and accreditation of the vocational training and on strengthening the partnership between the VTC in Mosul and the private sector in the area of construction.

The trainers, Dr. Ayman Al-Jawari and Dr. Nadom Muttalib from the Central Technical University appreciated the training toolkit developed by UNESCO and expressed confidence that the toolkit and the competency based training of trainers and teachers in TVET institutions in Iraq will have long-term positive impact in improving the quality of TVET to improve employability skills of graduates.



UNESCO delivers tablets to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as part of the TVET reform project

Baghdad, 24 November 2020 - UNESCO Iraq Office delivered 40 tablets to the Department of Labor and Vocational Training of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), as part of the activities of the TVET reform project in Iraq. This step raises the level of cooperation between UNESCO and MoLSA in the field of education and training, as it was

agreed to deliver these devices to the 38 Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) across all the governorates of Iraq for the purpose of using these devices in education and training for students. These tablets contain the curricula developed in cooperation with the Ministry, in addition to the reports of the labor market needs survey, which were implemented during the project.



UNICEF Representative witnessed the reopening of schools that had been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 1 December 2020 - UNICEF Representative, Ms. Hamida Lasseko, visited Al-Hariri school this week along with the Deputy Minister of Education to witness the reopening schools, which had been closed for many months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The school is an excellent example of how schools can use the School Based Management approach in ensuring a safe return to school for all children.



UNICEF supported the establishment of the Dohuk Educational TV

Dohuk, 14 December 2020 - UNICEF and the Directorate of Education (DoE) in Dohuk supported the establishment of the Dohuk Educational TV, through purchasing all TV equipment and recording 1,800 lessons for all the grades and subjects.

The channel is broadcasting live 4-8:00 pm and has the potential to reach over

20,000 children living in camps for the displaced as well as host communities. As a result of school closures due to COVID-19, UNICEF and partners are using a blended learning approach to ensure children continue to learn online, through TV channels and other tools so that no child is left behind.



The Education TV Studio in Adhamiya restored by UNESCO

Baghdad, 15 December 2020 - Together with the Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Falah Al-Qaisi, and the Secretary-General of the Iraqi National Commission for UNESCO, Mr. Alaa Al-Waeli, Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, inaugurated the

production and broadcasting studios of the Education TV Studio in Adhamiya. The Education TV Studio has been restored and equipped by UNESCO in partnership with Ethar and the generous support of the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF-OCHA).



UNICEF supports children through the blended learning approach

Baghdad, 16 December 2020 - UNICEF and the General Directorate of Education are supporting 4000 children in Arbat and Ashti IDP Camps and 1500 children in Arbat Refugee camp in Sulaymaniyah through the blended learning approach which offers alternative learning methods to ensure continuity of learning during the school

closures for children with limited access to the internet. With the support from BPRM, US Bureau of Population, Refugees, Kuwait, and Germany.



COVID-19 and its impact threaten to undo many of the achievements made in Iraq and around the world on the path to fulfilling the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child



Baghdad, 20 November 2020 – As the world marks the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention of the Right of the Child, or CRC, on this World Children’s Day, it has become clear that children and adolescents in Iraq are those most at risk losing out as a result of COVID-19 and its secondary impacts.

The latest assessments by UNICEF and its partners show that the number of children and adolescents who risk falling into poverty and to lose out on their rights has doubled from 1 to 2 out of every 5 children, or up to 40% all children in the country. Unemployment and growing financial pressures on families, lack of access to schooling and healthcare are among the factors.

“Iraq is a signatory of the CRC, which means that it is committed to ensure that every child can practice all her or his rights, including the right to health, safety, freedom, education, clean water, and play. We are now seeing the number of girls and boys in Iraq who risk losing out on many of these rights grow at an alarming rate and as a result of the unintended consequences of the pandemic. The pandemic risks to undo many of the achievements that Iraq has made in fulfilling its commitments under the Convention,” explained Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the UN’s Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator for Iraq.

While symptoms among infected children and adolescents remain mild, the longer-term impact of COVID-19 on the education, nutrition and well-being can be life-altering. Poverty is on the rise as a result of unemployment, and violence against children appears to be

growing. With schools and other learning spaces closed and disruptions to healthcare services, it has become more difficult for some children and adolescents to continue learning and access essential basic healthcare such as routine vaccinations on time.

“We in Iraq cannot afford to stand by as this is going on. On this World Children’s Day, UNICEF renews our commitment to support the Federal government and the Kurdish regional government to ensure that every boy and girl grows up healthy and safe. We also urge the authorities to invest more impactfully in the services and social protection needed to support children and their families,” added Ms. Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF’s Representative in Iraq.

Since COVID-19 broke out, UNICEF has worked tirelessly to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on children. The children’s agency is providing water, hygiene and sanitation services in all IDPs camps and host communities, and it has mobilized over 400 youth volunteers across the country who are helping to promote hygiene and safe social distancing practices within their communities. It is also leading coordinating the UN’s effort in Iraq to reach families with correct information about COVID-19 online and offline.

In addition, UNICEF is training 30,000 healthcare workers in infection-prevention control and other skills to help them practice primary healthcare in their communities and it delivered much needed essential health services, including by going tent to tent to deliver immunization in a safe manner. As a result, the agency was able to help

to close the gap in immunization by stabilizing the decline in the number of children receiving their vaccinations as a result of the pandemic.

In order to ensure that children can continue to learn, UNICEF supported the establishment of a satellite educational channel and multiple online learning platforms, helping to bring the classroom into the homes of over 2.5 million of hard to reach students in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. It also provided protection gear, hygiene and sanitation for over 400,000 children and educators at exam centres in schools in camps for the internally displaced.

UNICEF is also working with the federal Ministry of Planning to design an emergency cash transfer to support the poorest and most vulnerable households affected by COVID-19 as they struggle to meet their basic needs. This is part of the agency’s work to help build up the capacity building of Iraqi government institutions and social protection system.

“UNICEF, and the UN family as a whole, is committed to long-term and durable solutions in the whole of Iraq. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our partners in the government in order to make sure that no child in Iraq is left behind and every girl and boy has an equal chance at living a full and equitable life, as per the Convention of the Rights of the Child,” added Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano.



Ministry of Health at Federal Government and Kurdistan Region, UNFPA launch helpline for adolescents and young people

Baghdad, 29 November 2020 - The Ministries of Health at the Federal and Kurdistan Region levels, launched, with the support of UNFPA and funding from Sweden, a helpline for adolescents and youth that provides free confidential counselling in Arabic and Kurdish languages. Young people can receive reliable and



age-appropriate information on mental health, reproductive health, adolescence and development, safe and healthy behaviours, nutrition. The counsellors also guide young people on how to prevent COVID-19. When needed the callers can be referred to youth-friendly clinical services. The helpline counsellors also provide information to young couples on family planning, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted infections.

The counsellors are health workers, selected by the Ministries, and trained by "Together to Protect the Human and the Environment Association" with support from UNFPA.

The helpline is provided by Asiace, Korek and Zain telecommunication companies. It works from Sunday to Thursday from 9 am to 10 pm.

- 80000111 for Arabic speakers
- 80000777 for Kurdish speakers

Commenting on the project, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, said: "Many adolescents and young people withhold expressing their feelings. Often when young people are in emotional distress, they find it difficult to talk to people they know like their families and even their peers. The helpline can assist them with advice, and guide them through their emotions without judgment. Adolescents and youth in Iraq have lived through many crises and a lot of them are suffering from psychological repercussions. I truly hope that these services will make a positive difference in the lives of young people, especially now during this pandemic."

UNICEF receives 26 million from Germany to support national systems and ensure vulnerable children in Iraq receive quality basic and social protection services in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 November 2020 - The German Government, through its Development Bank, the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), has contributed 26 million Euros to UNICEF in order to help the agency in its ongoing efforts to assist the Government of Iraq in strengthening its systems and improve access to quality basic services and social protection for children and their families. This latest amount brings the German Government's total contributions to UNICEF Iraq to a total of 159 million Euros since 2015.

Vulnerable children and their families in Iraq are disproportionately affected by the lack of safe water, education, and social protection. The needs of the poorest have become even more acute as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its secondary impacts, such as disruption in schools and health services, and rights violations, as well as rising poverty, all diminish the chance of vulnerable children to realize their basic rights to survive, be protected, and continue learning.

In light of the scale of the pandemic's effect particularly on children and their families, the German Government has reserved 6 million Euros exclusively for measures addressing COVID-19 related activities such as the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) and the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).

"This funding has come in at a critical time, when we should be doing all that we can to limit the effects of the pandemic on all children, especially the most vulnerable. Thanks to our German partner, we are able to scale up our efforts

to support the Government of Iraq to strengthen national systems' ability to respond and provide better quality and coordination of the basic services that it provides, public social protection for children and their families, and help to train educators, counsellors and other professionals working with children," explained Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

For his part, the German Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Dr Ole Diehl, emphasized that the international community can only win the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic by working together.

"Germany continues to support Iraq in its fight against COVID-19. This is why we have launched an extensive global COVID emergency program, under which also a sizeable COVID-19 response window is allocated for Iraq and our contribution assigned to this program respectively. Good health and sanitary infrastructure are paramount to contain the virus. More importantly, every one of us needs to take part in the fight against Corona by wearing masks, keeping up social distancing and observing rules of basic hygiene."

Since the pandemic broke, the number of children and adolescents who risk falling into poverty has doubled, from one out of five children and adolescents to over 2 out of every 5. Children and adolescents, who make-up more than half of the population in the country, are also the most at risk of experiencing poverty, service disruptions in critical basic services like primary health, water sanitation and hygiene,

education and increase in rights violations.

"Investing in one's children is the best investment any nation can make. The Iraqi government needs our support to further develop its technical capacities, strengthen its systems, and deliver for its children. We are especially appreciative of the support of our German partner at this critical time when we are working with the Government to enhance its ability and systems to deliver better education, health services, water, sanitation and protection for every boy and girl in Iraq," added Ms. Lasseko.

There are 1.77 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and another 1.5 million who remain displaced and therefore exposed to higher risks of deprivation, violence and exploitation. The project which will be rolled out over 18 months, will target such populations. The project focuses on long-term sustainability by strengthening national systems and capacities to provide integrated access to safe water, education and health services, protection, and social assistance, with the goal of enabling children to overcome poverty, practice their rights and fulfil their potential. It will be implemented at the Federal level and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in partnership with the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, the Education, the Directorates of Education at sub-national levels, and national and international Civil Society Organisations.



EU – UNESCO TVET Reform Project Phase 2: Improving socio-economic status for vulnerable youth in Iraq



Baghdad, 30 November 2020 - The project will ensure inclusive access to improved Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) skills development services and institutes is increased, contributing to improved employability and socio-economic status for vulnerable youth.

The European Union (EU) and UNESCO have signed a new 5 million Euro agreement for the second Phase of the national TVET reform project.

Phase 2 of the TVET Reform Programme will strengthen and consolidate the policy and systems developed in Phase 1 by embedding them in Federal and local Directorate policies and procedures and through their application at Institute level. The focus will be to create “Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in five MoE vocational schools in Dohuk, Mosul, Baghdad, Karbala and Basra and four Technical Universities. These nine institutions will be the focus for applying the policy and systems outputs of phase 1 of the programme, and working intensively with Ministries, local Directorates and local school and university staff to develop CoVEs as a model and resource for other institutions and other governorates in order to deepen TVET practice at the delivery point. The work will include the refurbishment of selected workshops to allow competence based assessments and more relevant practical training to take place in line with the new curricula. The economic sectors selected are agriculture, construction and hospitality, with one additional sector (ICT), based on the evidence of the need for ICT competencies in the labour market and sector skills analysis carried out in Phase 1.

The Phase 2 builds on the TVET reform Project (2015-20), also funded by the European Union and implemented by

UNESCO, in partnership with the government under the leadership of the Prime Minister’s Advisory Committee (PMAC). Phase 1 focused on supporting the development of national level education and training policy and systems, including a TVET quality assurance system and a TVET qualifications framework. Based on surveys of the skills needed in the labour market, Phase 1 of the programme developed occupational standards, curricula and teaching materials for training at secondary and post-secondary level in the fields of construction, agriculture and hospitality.

“This new phase of the initiative will continue to drive the reform of TVET in Iraq by developing the capacities of the TVET providers. This will allow us to have concrete improvements in the delivery and quality assurance of TVET provision and thereby give our young people the competencies they need to join the workforce with useful skills, for their career and for our economy and society,” said the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Hamid K. Ahmed.

“Job creation is a core area of EU support to Iraq. I believe that by ensuring the provision of quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Iraq will have better skilled workforce and well -prepared to support the economy. Education is not

only as means for better skills since effective education and training policies can also enhance personal development, encourage active citizenship and strengthen equity, as well as promote social inclusion and integration. This project will support all these objectives by providing young Iraqis with the necessary knowledge and expertise to support their country’s economic growth,” said Martin Huth, EU Ambassador to Iraq.

“Building on the achievements of TVET 1, this project will develop the capacities of the TVET providers to deliver quality and practical training programmes fully oriented towards employment and self-employment,” said UNESCO Country representative, Paolo Fontani. “The emphasis has shifted downstream from developing policy to its implementation in order to increase the employment of Iraq’s youth. To do so requires improving the capacity of the TVET Institutions to meet international standards for quality teaching and learning while keeping abreast of rapidly evolving employment market needs and demands for skills. We believe this is the way to have the biggest impact on Job Creation for the Youth and therefore to help to stabilize Iraqi society. We are grateful to the EU for their continuous generous support, and to the Iraqi authorities for their strong partnership”.

On 16 December 2020 during a partners meeting held in Baghdad, UNESCO with the generous support of the European Union announced the launch of the TVET Reform Project 2.

The conference was attended by UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani, and Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation, represented the European Union, the Deputy Minister of Education and Deputy Minister of Higher Education, several Iraqi technical university Presidents, representatives from the private sector and more.



UNESCO is strengthening partnerships with the private sector to encourage youth employment and training in specialized cultural and creative industries relating to the reconstruction process in Basra

Basra, 30 November 2020 - Within the framework of the project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" supported by the European Union, UNESCO is strengthening partnerships with the private sector to encourage youth employment and training in specialized cultural and creative industries relating to the reconstruction process in Basra. UNESCO launched an apprenticeship programme for Basra in Carpentry focusing on Shanasheel, supporting two carpentry workshops in Basra, one small and one medium enterprise, to take on and train apprentices under the supervision of the Department of Labour and Social Affairs and the Vocational Training Center's staff in Basra. Currently, 12 apprentices from vulnerable groups have been engaged by the industry and are working on various city projects. The programme hopes to alleviate economic hardship caused by the past

conflict and the current COVID crisis and to help address the ongoing skills shortage in Basra in key areas of reconstruction.

The elaborate shanasheel carpentry technique for windows that protrude outward to the street is a traditional style of Ottoman buildings in the nineteenth century. It not only provides a view of the street, but also adds more space to the upper floors. Traditionally, these projections were supported by wooden pillars and columns. In the newer houses built after the arrival of the British in 1915, the Shanashel technique was largely replaced by H shaped steel beams (Shelman). However, UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities are jointly promoting the retention and safeguarding of the remaining elements of this important cultural heritage of the city of Basra through the programme.



UNICEF and New Zealand partner to protect and support children and young people in Iraq

Baghdad, 2 December 2020 - UNICEF has welcomed a boost of new funds amounting to USD 1.3 million dollars from the New Zealand Government in support of its Country Programme in Iraq.

With this generous funding from New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, MFAT, UNICEF will work with the Government of Iraq and its local partners towards providing durable solutions for displaced communities and returnees in a cost-effective and sustainable way, including services for children and young people to better protect them from exploitation, abuse and violence, in an age appropriate and gender informed way.

"The New Zealand Government is honored to be partnering with UNICEF to support the children and youth of Iraq as they return to liberated territories and start to rebuild their lives," said New Zealand's Ambassador-designate to Iraq Matthew Hawkins.

UNICEF will also support with the psycho-social support and rehabilitation of children and young people who have been affected by armed conflict and their reintegration into their communities.

"We highly appreciate this funding from the Government of New Zealand. It will strengthen our work in supporting young people in Iraq, especially young girls, to reach their full potential. With this generous funding UNICEF will support the most vulnerable young people in areas that have been affected by the recent violence by helping them acquire vocational and entrepreneurship skills to better prepare them for today's

employment market." said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

This funding will be instrumental for the children's agency to focus on the most vulnerable children and young people who are displaced or have recently returned to their areas of origin in the governorates of Salah al Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Ninewa. This will ensure that no child is left behind in Iraq.



SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert attended medal ceremony for Nepalese UNGU

Kirkuk, 12 November 2020 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSJ) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today at the UNAMI compound in Kirkuk, a medal-awarding ceremony for the members of the Nepalese Guard Unit who have completed a six-months rotation as a unit guarding the UN compound in Kirkuk.



UN in Iraq organized an online media training for 40 journalists to inform about the UN and the work of its missions, agencies, funds and programmes in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 November 2020 - The United Nations in Iraq organised on 19 November 2020 a one-day online media training workshop for 40 journalists from across the country to inform about the UN and the work of its Missions, Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Iraq.

Part of a suite of activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the workshop hosted freelance reporters and journalists representing various media outlets, from traditional media such as print, radio, television, to digital media like the online news channels, podcasts as well as social media influencers.

The sessions were given by communications experts from UNAMI, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO on behalf of the UN family in Iraq. Topics and discussions focused on the role of the UN in Iraq, the ethical coverage of children and young people, freedom of expression and combatting hate speech, gender sensitivity in the media and reporting on gender-based violence as well as the role of



journalists in the prevention and control of health emergencies/outbreaks.

Video link [Arabic]: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-b0_9-7xrh0&feature=youtu.be

SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert attended a Christmas Mass in Baghdad

Baghdad, 24 December 2020 - A Christmas Mass was celebrated today at the Sayidat al-Najat Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad. Among attendees were the Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Iraqiyoun Coalition head, Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim, and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert.

