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Iraq: Clock ticks on all-important elections, commitment to credibility needed

New York, 25 August 2021 - With just 46 days until Iraq goes to the polls, the UN Assistance Mission for the country (UNAMI) is stepping up its communications to inform voters about their conduct, Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert told the Security Council on Wednesday, stressing that it is up to the political parties themselves to refrain from attempts to distort the results.

Briefing Council members for the first time in person in over a year, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, who is also the head of the Mission, also called claims that UNAMI is advocating for a postponement of the elections “frankly absurd”.

She urged everyone to “stick to the facts”, focus on their own roles and refrain from using the United Nations as a scapegoat.

“Truth, discipline and, yes, courage, are required at this critical juncture”, said the UN official

Misinformation ‘risky business’

If misinformation overtakes reality, “it is not only an enormous energy-drain for those working hard for the greater good of Iraq,” she cautioned. “It is also risky business.”

The UNAMI chief urged media outlets to provide accurate, reliable and timely information, instead of fuelling “false perceptions to suit their backers”.

Stressing that Iraq “leads and owns” the 10 October elections, she reminded that their credibility would prove essential for its future.

Elections at hand

Detailing joint efforts, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said that the Independent High Electoral Commission has reached “several complex milestones” while noting



that UNAMI has provided technical assistance wherever it can.

She outlined that candidate lists have been finalized; a ballot lottery conducted for all 83 constituencies; ballot printing is ongoing; and all ballot papers expected in country by mid-September.

Meanwhile, polling and results management systems are being reviewed by an independent audit firm.

In parallel, she said preparations for UN monitoring are moving rapidly, with most members of the preparatory team being deployed to Baghdad “as we speak” and regional teams due on the ground in early September.

The Special Representative emphasized that the October elections have “the potential to be different” from those in 2018, and noted that that five times as many UN personnel are currently engaged as were three years earlier.

To calls for a boycott, she cautioned that “a vote not cast, is in fact a gift to those you may be opposed to.”

“With the election date rapidly approaching – Iraq will have our support at every step of the way”, assured the UNAMI chief.

“These elections were hard earned. And I can only emphasize the importance of credible elections for the future of Iraq’s young democracy”.

Deep reforms needed

Iraq is desperately in need of deep, structural reforms, which require unwavering determination, immense patience, and lots of time, according to the UN official, who urged authorities, officials, political parties and candidates not to let the Iraqi people down.

“Understand that accountability is key to restore public trust”, she stressed.

Turning to the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said that Kuwait “conclusively identified” the remains of a further 10 individuals from its list of those missing since 1991.

With a total of 30 cases of missing persons formally closed since November 2020, she expressed hope that “this important step will bring some closure to the families”.

By UN News.

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New York, 25 August 2021 – On its meeting convened on 25 August 2021, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. The text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting starts on page 3.

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Baghdad, 7 July 2021 - 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. *More on page 8*

The future is now: engaging youth to prevent violent extremism in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 July 2021 - In Iraq, engaging youth on issues related to preventing and combating violent extremism is vital to securing a peaceful future after decades of conflict. On 12 July 2021, UNDP Iraq and the National Committee on the Implementation of the Strategy to Prevent/Combat Violent Extremism at the National Security Advisory concluded a two-day workshop engaging fifty youth representatives from across Iraq on the implementation of the strategy at national and local levels. *More on page 6.*

Female Genital Mutilation: an infringement on morals and rights

Erbil, 22 July 2021 - "Come with me, we need to go to the bakery - my mother told me one morning," said 53-year-old Dania*. "That day, I experienced fear, deception, and excruciating pain. I was only seven," she recalls of the day she underwent Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)... *More on page 20.*

Iraq launches a new 'Human Rights National Action Plan'

Baghdad, 26 July 2021 - At an event chaired by the Deputy Minister of Justice and organized with the support of the Office of the President and UNAMI Human Rights Office, Iraq publicly launched its new five-year Human Rights National Action Plan.

The Human Rights National Action Plan, prepared by the Ministry of Justice and endorsed by the Council of Ministers, seeks to harmonise national legislation with international human rights standards, strengthen national policies for the protection and promotion of human rights, and build human rights capacity within government institutions. *More on page 26.*

Iraq: New partnership to improve public sector governance, increase private sector participation, and rebuild human capital

Washington DC, 5 August 2021 — The World Bank Group has renewed its commitment to the continued support of Iraq, approving a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) to form the basis of its 2022–2026 partnership with the country. The framework lays out the main development goals the World Bank Group aims to support in Iraq and proposes a series of strategic interventions to help Iraq respond to the ongoing pandemic crisis, reform the economy and rebuild human capital. *More on page 47.*

SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: "In living memory of the victims, I wholeheartedly reaffirm our support and solidarity with those who continue to bear the scars of monstrous inhumanity"

Baghdad, 2 August 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated at the virtual 7th Annual Commemoration of the Yazidi Atrocities organized by Yazda. *The text of her remarks starts at page 27.*



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

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8842nd session held on 25 August 2021

New York, 25 August 2021 – On its 8842nd meeting convened on 25 August 2021, 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 the meeting:

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

To be back in the Council chamber, after one and half years, feels, I have to admit, like a particular privilege and honour. And I truly hope that this progressive return to normalcy, or something approaching it, will soon be within reach for all.

For the time being, however, we must be realistic: the pandemic is far from over, taking its daily toll of cases and claiming even more lives when tragedy strikes, as it did with yet another devastating fire in the COVID ward of a hospital in Nasiriyah last month.

Now, Mr. President, if you allow me, I would dedicate most of today’s briefing to Iraq’s all-important elections on October 10th. The clock is ticking, with forty-six days left until Iraq goes to the polls.

Now, I would like to start by emphasizing that IHEC, the Independent High Electoral Commission, is working diligently towards Election Day - in line with the Electoral Law and in accordance with pre-approved timelines.

In recent months, IHEC has reached several complex milestones. And, of course, UNAMI has provided - and continues to provide - technical assistance wherever it can. Worth noting: five times as many UN personnel are currently engaged as were in the 2018 elections.

As you may have gleaned from our monthly public reports:

- Candidate lists have been finalized;
- A ballot lottery was conducted for all 83 constituencies;
- Ballot printing is ongoing, with all ballot papers expected in country by mid-September;
- The polling and results management IT systems are being reviewed by an independent audit firm;
- Two out of three planned



polling day simulations have been conducted - with the most recent simulation and open to political parties and the media, on the 23rd of August. And the final simulation is scheduled for September.

- Recruitment of polling staff is ongoing, and training of electoral staff has begun as well.

- IHEC’s outreach strategy was launched on June 6 and covers key thematic areas including the new electoral system, the role of IHEC, the distribution of biometric cards, the counting process and announcement of results, integrity measures as well as specific awareness messages targeting, inter alia, women, youth, people with disabilities and IDPs or returnees.

I wish to commend IHEC not only for its dedication but also for its transformation. Iraq’s authorities and parties would do well to publicly acknowledge IHEC’s achievements so far. And the same goes for its independence. Casting doubt about IHEC’s ability to operate, risks further eroding voter confidence.

Now, in parallel, preparations for UN monitoring are moving rapidly. Most members of the preparatory team have been contracted and are being deployed to Baghdad as we speak. They will soon be followed by the regional teams, expected to be on the ground in the 1st week of September. And these regional teams will pave the way for the arrival of short-term experts.

Concurrently, and in line with our renewed mandate, UNAMI is

stepping up its strategic communication efforts aimed at informing the Iraqi voters on election preparations and related UN activities, sharing facts and figures, tackling misinformation and managing public expectations.

Mr. President,

We are often asked: will these October elections be different from the elections in 2018? This is a sensible question, as the lack of public trust in public authorities and institutions is long-standing and widespread.

In response, I can only point to the facts. The fact is, that IHEC is applying lessons learned from previous elections. The fact is, that significant changes to improve the electoral processes and preparations for E-day are being made - including an independent IT audit, new voter verification devices, numerous measures to tackle misuse of Electronic Voting Cards, and displaying election results in real-time during transmission, tabulation and announcement.

In other words: the October elections clearly have the potential to be different from the elections in 2018.

However, successful elections are not, and cannot be, the sole responsibility of IHEC. We therefore consistently call on all stakeholders (including government officials, parties, candidates, political forces, civil society organizations, media outlets and voters) to commit to transparent and credible elections - in words and in deeds.

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8842nd session held on 25 August 2021 *(continued)*



Mr. President, not surprisingly, fear of electoral fraud is being expressed by many. By Iraqi citizens, and also by political parties. Looking back on past events, this fear is well understood.

At the same time, it is fair to emphasize that the political parties themselves are the ones who can make or break these elections. No matter how many technical measures are put in place, it is up to them collectively to refrain from any attempt to force or distort election results. It is up to them to stop the buying of loyalties, voter suppression and/or other intentional, illegal actions. It is they who must lead by example, collectively. You only need one bad actor to ruin it for everyone else.

Another issue is the fact that misinformation – and even conspiracy theories – continue to create false but accepted perceptions.

Regrettably, misinformation is abundant and wide-ranging. About IHEC. About protesters. About government officials. About political rivals. And yes, also about the United Nations.

Now, UNAMI is working tirelessly to provide IHEC and others with considerable technical support, spending millions of taxpayers' money for additional experts on the ground. And yet, some have taken it upon themselves to baselessly claim that we were somehow calling for a postponement of these elections. Frankly absurd.

So let me be clear: if misinformation overtakes reality, it is not only an enormous energy-drain for those working hard for the greater good of Iraq, it is also risky business.

I therefore call, yet again, on all stakeholders to stick to the facts, to

focus on their own roles and responsibilities, and to refrain from using the United Nations as a scapegoat. Truth, discipline and, yes, courage, are required at this critical juncture.

I also would like to call on all media outlets to provide accurate, reliable and timely information to the Iraqi people, instead of fueling false perceptions to suit their backers.

It is high time to recognize that Iraq leads and owns the October elections. It is high time to stop blaming others for things of your own doing. It is high time to acknowledge that the credibility of these October elections will prove essential for Iraq's future.

Mr. President, of course, elections are not an ultimate objective in and of themselves. They are a means to an end. And that end is improved governance to build a safer, more prosperous and just Iraq.

And while the world is watching, I can only emphasize that the responsibility for the success of the upcoming elections rests with the Iraqi stakeholders and authorities. Not only that, also the responsibility for what comes next: the formation of a new government, one that is able - swiftly and effectively - to address Iraq's long list of unfinished domestic business.

Now, a few words on the calls for a boycott or postponement of the elections. The reasons for such calls vary. From everyday Iraqis expressing their disillusionment, their lack of trust, their anger, their loss of hope...to apparent acts of political maneuvering.

However, to be frank, a boycott is not an effective strategy, nor will it solve anything. On the contrary. A vote not cast, is in fact a gift to those you may be opposed to. Hence, it is important,

for voters and politicians alike, to return to the process.

Also, and importantly, Iraq needs to move beyond the elections to (hopefully) go from a prolonged political standstill to dynamic and responsive governance.

Now - to the Iraqis calling for a boycott because of their disillusionment, I would like to say the following:

The Iraqi people are not a homogeneous and uniform group. Iraq is a diverse society, home to a vast array of peoples, languages and religions. Visions and opinions differ.

This means that the outcome of the elections might not be what you are hoping for. It might even provide legitimacy to a government that would not be your personal preference.

But one thing is certain: by not voting, you place yourself outside the electoral process. Events that affect you will only be shaped by others. As I said: by not casting your vote, you are gifting your silence to those you may disagree with.

And yes, there is no denying it: a sense of realism and pragmatism is important. Also, because these elections will not lead to immediate miracles. No elections can.

Plainly speaking, Iraq is desperately in need of deep, structural reforms. And such reforms take unwavering determination, immense patience and lots of time.

Now, it has to be said, democracy - for all its rewards – can be (in many ways) painstaking business. Balancing diverse interests and opinions always requires compromise. And the truth is: sustainable democratic societies across the world are often the opposite of overnight wonders: again they require immense patience to build, and constant efforts to maintain.

Now, don't get me wrong: after the many years of hoping, demanding and protesting, impatience is (of course) very understandable. So yes, the pain, the disillusionment, the frustration about a lack of economic, social and political prospects are very well understood.

But in a democracy, one makes one's voice heard not only through public protests but also, and critically, at the ballot box. This is your country, your vote. Stand up and be counted.

And to the authorities, civil servants, officials, political forces, parties and candidates - I would like to say:

Do not let the Iraqi people down. Service to the citizens - whatever their

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8842nd session held on 25 August 2021 *(continued)*

background, belief, religion, opinion or conviction – service to the citizens should be your first priority. And the focus must be on solutions that represent the interests of all people. Solutions that only speak to the majority, or a certain component in particular, are untenable in the long run.

And actions speak louder than words. Beautiful declarations and speeches are plenty, but at the end of the day it is all about getting things done. Combat pervasive corruption. Tackle negligence. Fight incompetence. Leave aside narrow partisan interests. Overcome factionalism and muhasasa. Do not allow the pillaging of state institutions.

Proceed at once with desperately needed reforms. Diversify the economy to decrease Iraq's vulnerability to commodity price swings.

Move away from constant crisis management and ad-hoc deals. Instead, implement what you agreed upon and work towards a predictable modus operandi.

Halt the intimidation, aggression, abductions and assassinations. End impunity. Understand that accountability is the key to restore public trust. Act upon it. The Iraqi people have a right to know.

Work on Iraq's domestic resilience. And do not fall prey to external power competitions. Rein in armed groups that continue to operate outside state control, be they foreign or domestic. Assert the sovereignty and authority of the State.

Acknowledge that political inaction comes at a very high price which the Iraqi people ultimately pay. Recognize that empty or broken promises only further erode public trust and Be wary of the fact that simmering anger easily swells.

All this to say: the stakes are immensely high. I hope history will not repeat itself.

Mr. President, before closing, a progress report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Since my last briefing, the State of Kuwait conclusively identified the remains of a further 10 individuals from its list of persons missing since 1991.

This means that after thirty long years, a total of thirty cases of missing persons have been formally closed since November 2020. And I sincerely hope that this important step will bring some closure to the families of the missing.

Additionally, I would like to express my hope that an improvement in the COVID-19 situation - and a subsequent easing in related restrictions - will soon allow the resumption of field missions and explorations of potential burial sites to achieve further positive results.

Mr. President, in closing, let me underline that - with the election date rapidly approaching – Iraq will have our support at every step of the way.

These elections were hard earned. And I can only emphasize the importance of credible elections for the future of Iraq's young democracy.

Thank you very much."

Social Cohesion

Peacebuilding from the ground up: UNDP Iraq and swisspeace launch training on mediation for national peacebuilding practitioners in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 July 2021 - Creating meaningful impact at the grassroots level is vital for peacebuilding in fragile contexts. From 06 to 08 June 2021, swisspeace, in partnership with UNDP Iraq, led a capacity building workshop in Baghdad on mediation for 15 local peacebuilding practitioners and academics from Anbar, Erbil, Salah al-Din, Baghdad, Dohuk, Diyala, Babel, Maysan and Kirkuk governorates. The overall purpose of the training aimed at laying the foundation to develop a common language around mediation tools and dialogue and identifying needs and opportunities at the local level in Iraq.

With headquarters in Basel, Switzerland, swisspeace is a peacebuilding organization dedicated to reducing violence and promoting peace in areas affected by conflict. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UNDP Iraq and swisspeace in April 2021 to strengthen efforts for peacebuilding and social cohesion in Iraq through a two-year partnership.



"There are two aspects the training helped us to consider, academic and practical. On the academic level, the training helped us to absorb new methods and tools related to mediation and conflict prevention. On the practical level, I plan to transfer what I have learned in this training to youth by creating a training manual on the concepts discussed." - Aws al-Mudaffar Ahmed Abdul-Razaq, Babel Governorate, Diploma in Peace and Conflict Studies.

"In everyday life we perform mediation, from day to night, within our family, at the university, when discussing problems... the entire community is in an on-going mediation process. Teaching and learning mediation and conflict analysis skills is very important when discussing social cohesion topics." - Zervan Amin Abdullah, Duhok Governorate, Master's in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution.

"This training is different because the

Peacebuilding from the ground up: UNDP Iraq and swisspeace launch training on mediation... *(continued)*

trainees are at the center of the training, not the trainer. The training linked academic methods in mediation and conflict analysis with implementation in the field. What matters most in Iraq is how to transfer theory into practice, which was clear in the sessions.” -Bashkoush Jaafar Abdullah, Dohuk Governorate, Master’s in Educational Administration.

“This training helped me to rethink my role in society as a woman from Diyala, and my contribution to mediation in the various conflicts that occur in the province.” -Buthaina Mahmoud Abbas, Diyala Governorate, President of Hawa Foundation for Relief and Development.

UNDP Iraq has launched in 2020 a dedicated 5-year Social Cohesion

Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq. With thanks to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for their generous contribution, efforts for peacebuilding in Iraq are strengthened through collaboration with swisspeace to build capacities for mediation and peacebuilding at the local level in Iraq.

The future is now: engaging youth to prevent violent extremism in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 July 2021 - In Iraq, engaging youth on issues related to preventing and combating violent extremism is vital to securing a peaceful future after decades of conflict. On 12 July 2021, UNDP Iraq and the National Committee on the Implementation of the Strategy to Prevent/Combat Violent Extremism at the National Security Advisory concluded a two-day workshop engaging fifty youth representatives from across Iraq on the implementation of the strategy at national and local levels. Representatives from the Ministry of Youth and Sports were also present to respond to questions from the youth and discuss their role in the strategy’s implementation.

The workshop was facilitated by experts from the national committee and UNDP and included discussion on the national strategy and interactive breakout sessions on the role of youth and women in helping to implement and promote the strategy, supporting the role of local governments in its successful implementation, and recommendations that contribute to the formulation of the detailed implementation plan to achieve the strategy’s key goals. The workshop also included a discussion session on the

UNDP global report on young people at the forefront of preventing and responding to violent extremism.

Ali Abdullah Albedeiri, chairman of the National Committee on the Implementation of the Strategy to Prevent/Combat Violent Extremism in Iraq, states, “This has been a very beneficial workshop that has shortened the distance in engaging with youth and has helped us to reorient the committee’s work at the governorate level. We have agreed to continue this discussion soon with support from UNDP.”

“In Basra, I think communities need youth to be in the forefront of battling problems, including tribal and security issues. We need to engage and integrate youth in the government-run youth centers to help them to develop their skills and be more positive. We also need to provide them with job opportunities,” said Mohammed, 30, Basra.

“I would like to work on the implementation of the plan with the Office of the National Security Advisor to prevent violent extremism in my region as Ninewa has been through many challenges and it represents an Iraqi mosaic with people from all different backgrounds,” said Saraa, 31,

Ninewa.

“We need to raise awareness on preventing violent extremism with civic activists and influencers, who will spread these concepts to community members. We need to focus on extremism related to religion, politics, and culture. This involves working with religious institutions, and raising awareness during elections when political parties are campaigning, and among tribal sheikhs,” said Saja, 24, Diwaniya.

“What I liked about the workshop is that the national committee was open to discuss with us and hear our ideas. I spoke about including the history of religion in the strategy because it is so important for people to learn about all religions and not just their own. In future, I would like to work on projects related to hate speech, which has become an issue in Iraq,” said Hala, 28, Wasit.

“To prevent extremism in society we need to focus on cultural and skills building aspects and mobilize religious and government institutions to support projects to prevent extremism for youth. This workshop is an important first step by the government toward positive change,” said Maitham, 30, Missan

The 11-12 July session is part of a series of engagements, including a previous workshop with deputy governors in June 2021, and next steps include specialized sessions to build the capacity of main actors at the governorate level to enhance their role in the implementation of the national strategy to prevent/combat violent extremism.

Support to Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) in Iraq is part of the UNDP Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.



UNDP Iraq hosts interfaith conference for religious leaders on peaceful coexistence



Baghdad, 15 July 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP) in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD), the Council of Ministers Secretariat, the Governorate of Salah al-Din, and supported by the Government of Denmark, concluded an interfaith religious conference today for 70 religious leaders from Salah al-Din Governorate.

The two-day conference took place in Baghdad as the second in a series of conferences targeting religious leaders from Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. Based on the recommendations of these conferences, UNDP will work closely with the religious leaders on building their capacities and supporting their efforts on advancing the return and

reintegration process for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in partnership with local and national authorities.

Key recommendations of the 14-15 July conference that discussed the return of IDPs and strengthening peaceful coexistence were highlighted: to form a network for all religious leaders in Salah al-Din to coordinate efforts on social cohesion, joint steps to amicably resolve issues around endowments properties and acquisitions, and to work with the United Nations to support the return of IDPs, including livelihood opportunities.

The conference is part of UNDP Iraq's programme for religious leaders aiming to enhance their role in community coexistence and social cohesion, including establishment of a co-

existence network to foster dialogue. Work undertaken with interfaith religious leaders contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16).

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad emphasizes, "We are thankful to the Government of Denmark for supporting engagement with religious leaders in Iraq through our Social Cohesion Programme. UNDP Iraq's work with religious leaders and engagement with local and national government ensures a unified approach to peacebuilding and social cohesion among a range of religious sects."

The Deputy Minister of Migration and Displaced, Mr. Karim Hussein Ali Al-Nuri states, "It is important that all Iraqis work toward spreading the culture of tolerance, and we call on religious leaders, in their important role, to be active in emphasizing social reintegration and acceptance within Iraqi society."

The Deputy Secretary General of Council of Ministers Secretariat, Mr. Jasim Al-Habousi indicates, "This conference is aligned with the Government of Iraq's priority to ensure return and reintegration of all Internally Displaced Persons to their areas of origin in Iraq, and it is our hope to find solutions to encourage this movement for these populations to live with dignity in alignment with their civic rights."

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.

Building bridges between communities: open poetry event at a school in Hawija, celebrated the district's strong history of folk poetry

Hawija, 06 July 2021 - Kirkuk Governorate's Hawija district is home to an agricultural community with rich cultural traditions and folk history. This community suffered greatly under the control of the Islamic State and was heavily impacted during liberation operations to retake the area. Today, Hawija is the site of profound hope as this community continues to rebuild. In June 2021, IOM Iraq organized an open poetry event at a school in Hawija, celebrating the district's strong

history of folk poetry – a medium that has long been used as a means to build bridges between and communicate across the area's diverse communities. The event brought together youth and other community members from varying backgrounds to share an assortment of original and traditional poems, thereby forging new connections, celebrating diversity and encouraging the creative use of poetry and culture for social transformation.



Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes | Report No. 9

Baghdad, 7 July 2021 - 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. The ninth report is now available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Z63Rbc>

Among the highlights for May-June 2021 are:

- IHEC shared candidate vetting documentation with relevant Ministries and the Accountability and Justice Commission.
- Decisions issued by IHEC on disqualified candidates, several appeals submitted at the Electoral Judicial Panel.
- IHEC plans to set up 55,041 regular polling stations in 8,273 regular polling centres on election day; the number of special voting and IDP polling locations being finalized.
- Online recruitment process for more than 300,000 polling staff ongoing.
- Training of trainers on electronic devices started; 1st level completed with 2nd level at GEOs scheduled next.
- Audit company shared first two reports on the audit of the technologies, IHEC and technology provider are addressing audit findings.

- IHEC signed the contract for the printing of ballot papers.
- Public outreach and awareness plan developed to launch IHEC outreach campaign.
- 48 proposals from 32 CSOs selected under the CSOs small grants project on electoral awareness.
- IHEC held a conference with heads of political parties, coalitions and candidates to brief them on ongoing electoral preparations, voting procedures, and guidelines for upcoming campaign period.
- Election Supreme Security Committee continues its periodic meetings and site visits to governorates.

In details:

IHEC has finalized the public outreach and awareness plan which was prepared with UNAMI inputs. The plan identifies the activities and materials to be produced to inform and mobilize voters and to encourage their active participation in the election. The plan will be implemented between June and October 2021. It covers key thematic areas of the electoral process and targets all voters, youth and first-time voters, women, people with disabilities, minorities and socially excluded individuals, IDPs and returnees, special voting and political parties.

On 29 June, the President of Iraq hosted a meeting attended by IHEC Commissioners, UNAMI and the Prime Minister's adviser on elections to discuss certain topics related to ongoing

electoral preparations. The President provided recommendations and heard the views of IHEC, UNAMI and the PM electoral adviser on issues relating to the use of short-term voter cards, continuation of biometric voter registration, electronic and manual counting, and the announcement and publication of results.

IHEC has so far received very few responses to the invitation for international observation that was sent to embassies and international organizations. Based on latest IHEC information, only 10 embassies have responded to the invitation letter. IHEC subsequently provided the necessary observer accreditation documentation, which only two embassies have completed and submitted thus far. IHEC requested UNAMI support for further follow-up with these embassies and organizations, and for the topic to be included in discussions during briefing meetings with the diplomatic community in Iraq.

UNAMI Regional Electoral Operations Advisers continued their field visits and maintained regular contacts with IHEC governorate officials in relation to ongoing electoral preparations. These include updates on the status of polling centre lists, storage facilities, recruitment of staff, distribution of voter cards and public outreach activities.

IHEC conducts a country-wide ballot lottery

Baghdad, 7 July 2021 - In its preparation for the October 2021 Council of Representative (CoR) Elections, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) conducted today a country-wide ballot lottery to determine the order of the candidates on the ballots of 83 constituencies in 19 IHEC Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs). At the same time, the lottery process for all the Iraqi components was held at the IHEC HQ. It was a nation-wide televised live event attended by political parties, candidates, media and other stakeholders. On 6 July, IHEC approved the final candidate list of 3243 candidates that would contest the October elections.

To carry out the lottery process, UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA) supported IHEC by procuring 46 ballot lottery machines. IHEC with the support of the UNAMI OEA Advisors, developed the ballot lottery procedures and held a training for 57 Governorate



Electoral Offices staff in Baghdad, on 1 July. Assistance was also provided in the field of public outreach (with the production of a video) and media guidance.

UNAMI OEA Regional Advisors worked with the IHEC GEOs at the governorate level, by working to instill further confidence in GEOs over the preparations for the lottery.

Training programs for women candidates who will run in the upcoming parliamentary elections



Baghdad, 08 July 2021 - The National Security Adviser has started training programs for women candidates who will run in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

These programs aim at empowering women candidates, provide them with security and psychological support, and communicate effectively with them during the period leading up to the

elections scheduled to be held on the tenth of next October.

These courses fall within the activities assigned to the National Security Adviser within the national operational plan to support and empower women politically and were inaugurated in cooperation with the Department of Women Empowerment in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Independent High Electoral Commission and UN Women.

UN Women also provided technical assistance to the Office of the National Security Adviser for the training of the 6th batch of female candidates on cyber security and social engineering. So far, 497 female candidates from Baghdad and other governorates have attended the training. The sessions are being offered online and in-person to both politically affiliated candidates and independent candidates.

IHEC conducts polling and counting simulation exercise

Baghdad, 12 July 2021 – The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) conducted today polling and counting simulation exercise for the forthcoming early general elections. A total of 1,079 polling stations (PSs), one in each voting regional centre (VRC) were involved, out of which 40 PSs were for special voting. A total of 8,000 IHEC staff (simulating voters) voted across the country and results were transmitted later to IHEC HQ, where the retrieval of Flash Desk was also completed the same day to test the result management system. These PSs were also manually counted, the result sheets were retrieved for testing tabulation software. A copy of the results was displayed at Governorate Election Offices (GEO) levels per constituencies to depict GEO level Result Display as well.

UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA) assisted IHEC in developing the manual counting tabulation software

that have been tested in this simulation. UNAMI OEA advisors were observing the simulation at national and GEO levels and shared their observation notes for further improvement with IHEC.

UNAMI OEA also advised IHEC on how better to prepare the simulation by taking into consideration COVID-19

preventive measures and counselled IHEC on media guidance on the event and assisted in the development of a promotional and informative video with contributions from GEOs. OEA also seek the opportunity of the simulation exercise for shooting awareness video and photos on voting steps, to be used for the public outreach campaign.



UN Women engaged on development of the guidelines on gender-sensitive polling procedures for polling staff

Baghdad/Erbil, 15 July 2021 – UN Women engaged, in consultations with the Women's Studies Centre of the Baghdad University, on development of the guidelines on gender-sensitive polling procedures for polling staff and a manual on the Iraqi political system

and the work of the Council of Representatives. Additionally, UN Women facilitated a meeting in Erbil between the Directorate of Women's Empowerment and the High Council for Women's Affairs during which collaboration on the implementation of

the workplan of the Higher Committee for Women's Political Empowerment was discussed. Attendees also identified ways to advocate integrating activities on advancing women's political participation into relevant government entities existing plans.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 23 July 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "If misinformation

overtakes reality, we may rapidly face dangerous and false, but accepted perceptions. Hence, let me emphasize: at Iraq's request, the UN is fully

engaged to assist the authorities in organizing credible and transparent October elections".

UN signs financing agreement with France to support UN election monitoring of the 10 October 2021 Iraq CoR elections

UN signs financing agreement with France to support UN election monitoring of the 10 October 2021 Iraq Council of Representatives elections
Baghdad, 26 July 2021 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of 500,000 Euro from France to a UN-led project to monitor the upcoming 10 October 2021 Iraq Council of Representatives elections. The French funding will support the

deployment of UN electoral monitors pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2576 of 2021.

"The international community has positively answered to the request made by the Government of Iraq to monitor the upcoming legislative elections. France is deeply committed to support free, fair and credible elections in Iraq in response to aspirations, rule of law and reforms

expressed by the Iraqi citizens," said Bruno Aubert, Ambassador of France to Iraq.

On behalf of UNAMI, UNOPS signed an agreement with France to manage the financing and administration of the project. The United Nations thanks France for its contribution, which strengthens support to the process of holding credible and transparent elections in Iraq.

UN signs financing agreement with Germany to support UN election monitoring of the 10 October 2021 Iraq CoR elections

Baghdad, 26 July 2021 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of 1 million Euro from Germany to a UN-led project to monitor the upcoming 10 October 2021 Iraq Council of Representatives elections. The German funding will support the deployment of UN electoral monitors pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2576 of 2021.

" International monitoring of the

upcoming parliamentary elections has been a request of the government and the people of Iraq. We strongly support the efforts of the Iraqi High Electoral Commission and the Government of Iraq to provide for secure, free and fair elections. International election monitoring can strengthen the credibility of the electoral process and encourage a high turn-out of voters", said Peter Felten, Chargé d'affaires of

the German Embassy to Iraq.

On behalf of UNAMI, UNOPS 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 credible and transparent elections in Iraq.



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

Baghdad, 2 August 2021 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of 216 million JPY (about 2 million USD) from Japan to a UN-led project to support and assist capacity-building within the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The Japanese funding will support IHEC as it prepares for the October 2021 Parliamentary election.

"The election is the most fundamental occasion to translate Iraqi people's will and aspirations into national politics. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help strengthen IHEC's IT capacities and implementation of COVID-19 preventive measures. I believe that our assistance contributes to the Iraqi Government's effort in ensuring transparency and credibility of the upcoming elections" said SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq.

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

Japan for its contribution, which strengthens support to the process of holding credible and transparent elections in Iraq.



Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes | Report No. 10

Baghdad, 12 August 2021 - 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. The tenth report, attached to this email, is also available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc>

Among the highlights for July 2021 are:

- IHEC approved the final list of candidates eligible to contest the 10 October 2021 CoR elections.
- A ballot lottery was conducted for all 83 constituencies and for the component seats to determine the order of candidates as they will appear in the ballot paper.
- IHEC announced the official campaign period; monitoring committees were established to follow up on any reports of electoral campaign violations.
- Ballot papers are currently being printed at secure locations by the German printing company; IHEC technical committee is overseeing the process with UN support.
- The first of three planned polling day simulations took place on 12 July.
- IHEC approved the concept for the establishment of Results Display Centers (RDCs) in IHEC GEOs and in Baghdad.
- More than 740,000 online applications

were received for 350,000 polling staff positions.

In details:

On 7 July, IHEC conducted the ballot lottery to determine the order of candidates as they will appear in the ballot papers. The lottery took place in the 19 IHEC Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) for all the 83 electoral constituencies and in the IHEC national office for the component seats. The process was conducted in a smooth and well-organized manner, broadcasted on live TV countrywide, and was well attended by the candidates, representatives of political parties and alliances, media and other electoral stakeholders.

Being the first such countrywide activity conducted by the IHEC under the present Board of Commissioners, the activity was deemed a positive indication of IHEC's organizational capability to hold such a large-scale event. UNAMI provided support in developing the concept and procedures for the lottery and in procuring the lottery machines. UNAMI electoral staff were also present during the training of staff and the actual conduct

of the lottery itself in Baghdad and in certain field locations, providing support to their IHEC counterparts.

IHEC is currently implementing its outreach activities based on the finalized public outreach and awareness plan. The plan covers key thematic areas of the electoral process and targets all voters, youth and first-time voters, women, people with disabilities, minorities and socially excluded individuals, IDPs and returnees, special voting and political parties. UNAMI is providing support in developing the media and content for outreach activities, including info and motion graphics, and social media messages.

With the advice and support of UNAMI, IHEC is in the process of signing an MOU with the Communication and Media Commission (CMC) to boost the dissemination of IHEC awareness materials through TV stations, (including TV satellite channels), radio stations; systematic SMS via telecom operators; and the promotion of IHEC outreach materials through social media.



DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir attended the National Dialogue conference in Baghdad

Baghdad, 26 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, attended today the National Dialogue conference hosted by Iraqi Prime Minister, Mr. Mustafa Kadhim. The conference brought together political, social, protest movement, cultural and youth figures to discuss much needed reforms and recommendations on how these could be achieved. During the conference, Prime Minister Kadhim urged all segments of society to participate in the elections. Fair and transparent elections are one of the pillars of a democratic state-building and UNAMI is mandated by the UN Security Council to assist the Government of Iraq in preparing the early elections on 10 October 2021.



DSRSG Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir visited Kirkuk, discussed preparations for the early elections

Kirkuk, 25 August 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, visited today Kirkuk and met with the acting Governor, representatives of the Arab, Kurdish, Turkmen and Minorities components, in addition to the IHEC GEO. They discussed the current political situation in the Governorate, with a focus on preparations, challenges and concerns for the upcoming elections on 10 October.

In her meeting with the Acting Governor, Rakan Al-Jubouri, they agreed on the need to ensure credible, inclusive elections in October. The DSRSG pledged that UNAMI would continue to provide technical advice and support to the Iraqi people.

Talking to the representatives of Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen components DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir urged political parties to do their part to



make the elections a success, reiterating UNAMI's continued support to the process.

For the early elections to be truly inclusive, everyone needs to feel that their voice matters, was the main message from the meeting of DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir with representatives of Kirkuk communities.



Political Consultations



Baghdad, 7 July 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met in Baghdad with president and co-founder of the Sinjar Academy, Mr. Murad Ismael. They discussed political and security situation in Sinjar.

Photo courtesy of the Office of Mr. Ismael.

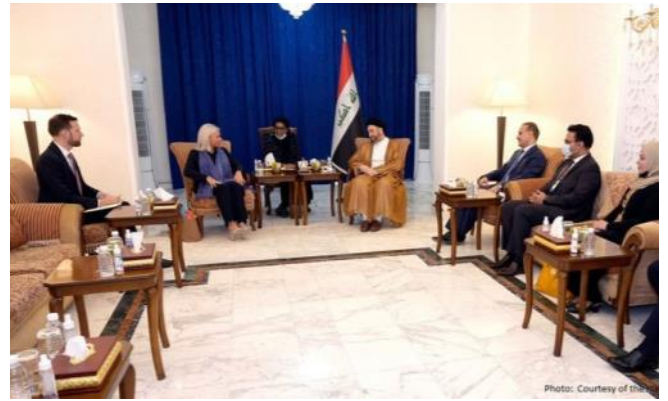


Baghdad, 11 July 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baghdad, Mr. Iraj Masjedi. They discussed, among other topics, the political situation in the country and the region, including the forthcoming early general elections in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of IRNA.



Baghdad, 19 July 2021 – The 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, H.E. Dr. Barham Salih. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country, including preparations for the early general elections in October. In light of the new enhanced UNAMI mandate, the President and the Special Representative reaffirmed their commitment to constructive cooperation towards free, fair, inclusive and Iraqi-led elections.
Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Presidency.



Baghdad, 22 July 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the head of the Al-Hikma National Movement, Sayyed Ammar Al-Hakim. They discussed the current political situation, including preparations for the upcoming elections. The Special Representative reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to assist the Iraqi authorities with the conduct of transparent and credible elections.
Photo courtesy of the media office of Sayyed Ammar Al-Hakim.



Baghdad, 2 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with a delegation of the Justice and Benevolence Movement (JBM) led by Suhaib Ismail al-Rawi. They discussed the political situation in the country, preparations for the forthcoming early parliamentary elections in October 2021, challenges related to security and issues facing female candidates. DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir stressed that the United Nations in Iraq remain fully dedicated to advising and assisting the Iraqi Authorities to ensure that credible and transparent elections are held on time, in October 2021.



Baghdad, 2 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with the Head of the Supreme Security Committee for Elections and Deputy Commander of Joint Operations, General Abdul Amir Al-Shammari. They discussed security preparations for the early general elections in October 2021. DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir stressed that it's key to provide a safe and secure environment for the elections to ensure that all candidates can campaign freely and all citizens can vote in full safety without facing any type of discrimination.



Mosul, 4 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with representatives of civil society of Ninewa. They exchanged views in an open and frank discussion on the preparations for the elections in October 2021, challenges related to security and issues facing female and minority candidates. DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir stressed that a trusted electoral process can help steer Iraq towards a safer and more prosperous future that Iraqis aspire to. She emphasized the important role that civil society organizations play in encouraging widespread participation and assured of continued United Nations support to the electoral process. She stressed that a higher voter turnout can help to counter manipulation and fraud.



Mosul, 4 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with the Mayor of Mosul, Mr. Zuhair al-Araji. They discussed the current political situation in the city, including preparations for the elections on 10 October 2021, challenges related to security and issues facing female candidates. DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir stressed that the United Nations in Iraq remain fully dedicated to advising and assisting the Iraqi authorities to ensure that credible and transparent elections are held on time, in October 2021.



Mosul, 4 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with the Governor of Ninewa, Mr. Najm Al-Jubouri. They discussed current political and security situation in the Governorate in the lead up to the 10 October elections, in addition to the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement. DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir emphasized that it's important to provide a safe and secure environment for the elections to ensure that all candidates can campaign freely and all citizens can vote in full safety without facing any type of discrimination.



Baghdad, 8 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with IHEC Commissioner, Dr. Ahlam Adnan al-Jabri, and Saeed al-Jayashi, from the Office of the National Security Advisor, during which they discussed the importance of promoting women's participation in the upcoming elections. DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir also met with female candidates who had completed training being offered by IHEC on complaints and appeals process, electoral campaigns procedures among other topics. She highlighted the UN's role in advancing women's participation as candidates and voters in the upcoming elections.



Erbil, 22 July 2021 - The President of the Kurdistan Region's Parliament, Ms. Rewas Faiq, received the Head of the UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez. They discussed latest political developments in the Region, including preparations for the forthcoming early parliamentary elections in October this year.

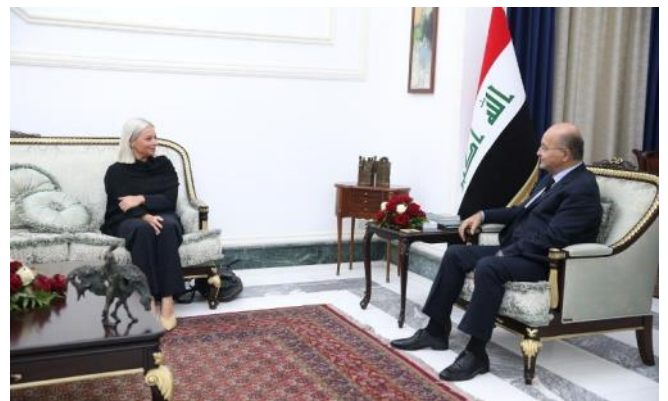
Photo courtesy of the KR Parliament.



Baghdad, 11 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with Dr. Yossra Mohsen, Director General of the Women Empowerment Directorate, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. They discussed progress made toward implementing the workplan of the Women's Political Empowerment including activities to promote women's participation in the upcoming elections, the status of the Anti-Domestic Violence Bill and the importance of engaging with civil society organizations working on women, peace and security.



Baghdad, 11 August 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), Judge Jalil Adnan Khalaf. They discussed the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections in Iraq, including IHEC staff issues, women's quota, IDP voting procedures and the importance of transparent communication.



Baghdad, 15 August 2021 - The 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, H.E. Mr. Barham Salih. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country, including preparations for the upcoming elections. The Special Representative reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to assist the Iraqi authorities with the conduct of credible and transparent elections. Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Presidency.



Baghdad, 19 August 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Executive Director of Nadia's Initiative, Mr. Abid Shamdeen. They discussed the lack of security that deeply affects the Sinjari population. SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert reiterated the need to implement the Sinjar Agreement without delay in order to establish the preconditions for the reconstruction of Sinjar and the return of internally displaced people.
Photo courtesy of Nadia's Initiative.



Baghdad, 11 July 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "Wishing journalist Ali al-Mikdam a speedy recovery. We salute his courage and determination, and condemn cowardly aggressions that threaten a pillar of democracy: freedom of expression".

Security

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 7 July 2021 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "These constant

attacks, last night again in Erbil, are an affront to the rule of law. Such acts are pushing the country towards the unknown, with the Iraqi people

potentially paying a high price. The legitimacy of the State must not be threatened by callous armed actors".

Baghdad, 13 July 2021 - "Our hearts go out to the victims of the devastating fire at Al Hussein Hospital in Nasiriya.

More must be done to ensure all Iraqis can receive care in a safe environment"
- Special Representative of the United

Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert.

Statement attributable to Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq

Baghdad - 13 July 2021 - UNICEF expresses its sincere condolences and extends its sympathy to the victims and families affected by the fire that broke out in the Imam Hussein Teaching Hospital ward for treatment of patients with COVID-19 in Nasiriyah on Monday night.

We acknowledge with sadness the dramatic number of deaths and people wounded.

UNICEF conveys its respect to the families and friends of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

UNICEF will continue supporting the

health sector in Iraq and calls for all parties to ensure safety in health facilities, especially during a time in which the COVID-19 pandemic is already causing pain and concern to many families.

"Children are killed and injured in an explosion in a market in Baghdad" - Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 July 2021- "UNICEF regrets to report that at least 25 people were killed, including children, and dozens were injured, as a result of an explosion today in Al-Wahailat market in the north-east of Baghdad.

"This horrific attack right before Eid Al-Adha is a terrible reminder of the violence Iraqi children continue to face.

"Those children were just preparing for the special days to come with their families. Our heartfelt condolences go to their families and we wish those injured a speedy recovery.

"Children should be protected at all times and to grow in a safe environment free from any form of violence.

"On the eve of Eid Al-Adha and as Iraqis mourn this sad moment, UNICEF calls for all actors in Iraq to work together towards a safer Iraq where children do not have to live in fear and where they enjoy their very basic activities and rights".

The Secretary-General strongly condemns the horrific bomb attack targeting civilians at a market in Al-Sadr City

New York, 19 July 2021 - Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General - on Iraq:

“The Secretary-General strongly condemns the horrific bomb attack targeting civilians at a market in Al-Sadr City today.

He extends his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Iraq. He wishes those injured a speedy recovery. This deadly attack ahead of the Eid al-Adha holiday is a reminder to us all that the scourge of terrorism knows no

bounds.

The Secretary-General underlines the need for the perpetrators of this crime to be swiftly brought to justice.” - Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

Security Council press statement on 19 July terrorist attack in Iraq

New York, 21 July 2021 - The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on Monday, 19 July 2021. The attack, which was claimed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), resulted in at least 30 deaths and at least 50 injured.

The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Iraq, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, democratic process and prosperity of Iraq.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of Iraq and all other relevant authorities in this regard.

The members of the Security Council reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable,

regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. They reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their support for Iraq's security and the continued fight against terrorism, including against ISIL/Da'esh.



UNAMI condemns loss of life in Ninewa airstrike, calls for investigation

Baghdad, 19 August 2021 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is following with grave concern the serious security developments in the north of Iraq, which, regrettably, have led to loss of life and many injuries in Sinjar town and Sheniya village.

Necessary precautions must be taken during military operations, including airstrikes, to protect and minimize harm to civilians who often suffer the

consequences of such attacks.

It is equally important to promptly and fully investigate such incidents, establishing accountability for civilian deaths and injuries.

Meanwhile, the long-beleaguered local population bears the brunt of this violence, as one conflict replaces another.

UNAMI calls on all relevant parties to put the interests of citizens first, exercising restraint to avoid a

dangerous escalation. Peace and stability are essential preconditions for reconstruction and the return of internally displaced people. The Sinjar Agreement therefore needs to be implemented without delay.

UNAMI continues to support dialogue and urges all parties to respect the principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

UNHCR is deeply saddened about the death of a child from a fire that broke out on 22 July in Ashti camp

Baghdad, 25 July 2021 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is deeply saddened about the death of a child from a fire that broke out on 22 July in Ashti camp for internally displaced persons in Sulaymaniyah governorate, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The fire destroyed six tents, before the camp's management extinguished it, preventing its further spread. UNHCR has immediately replaced the

tents and provided essential household items to the families whose shelters were destroyed and who lost their belongings. To address the needs of the families affected by the fire in Ashti camp, we are working with the humanitarian agencies on the ground, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the camp management, and the camp's residents. Furthermore, UNHCR is working with

all stakeholders to ensure that safety measures are in place, in order to prevent such tragic incidents from occurring again in the future.



Awareness raising on female leadership in decision making



Karbala, 25 June 2021 - At a conference organized by Jssor Youth Organization, the United Nations Human Rights Office highlighted how women across Iraq powerfully demonstrate their desire to shape their own future and critical to the full

enjoyment of their human rights. In its message the office provided examples of its work on the promotion, protection and respect of women rights, including by highlighting the prominent and active role of women and girls in recent demonstrations, expressing a shared

commitment to the promotion of women's rights and empowerment as a means of overcoming many social and cultural barriers.

The 120 participants highlighted the importance of full participation of women in all aspects of political, social, economic, educational and cultural life by sharing their own experiences and initiatives to counter gender restrictive norms and practices as an important step to ensure gender equality among women and men in Iraq. Participants included members of civil society organizations, youth groups and local government coming from Iraq's central and southern governorates.

At the end of the event, participants called for a strong participation of women in the upcoming elections, and to create more opportunities for women to share their experience in supporting local peace initiatives and social cohesion activities across Iraq. Photos courtesy of Jssor Youth Organization

Capacity building training held in Mosul

Mosul, 28 June 2021 - Ayadi Al Salam for Relief and Development enhanced the technical skills of local organizations in Mosul by implementing a capacity building training under project "Women Peacebuilder of Mosul" funded by the Women Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) and in partnership with UN Women. Topics of the training focused on financial management, Public Administration, Human resources and Project/Proposal Writing. A total of 35 women leaders participated in the training.



Better coordination for better results



Duhok, 1 July 2021 - Baghdad Women Association arranged meetings for 15 civil society organizations in Duhok to provide various services to women and girls including psychological, legal, economic support, and capacity development. The main aim was to ensure coordination and activate the referral mechanism between organizations in providing these services.

This activity was implemented under project "Women, Peace and Security in the Arab states Phase II" funded by the Government of Finland and in partnership with UN Women.

Women for peace workshop

Basra, 04 July 2021 - In order to promote peace through activist girls, Sawa Organization for Human Rights implemented a workshop entitled Women for Peace with the participation of 12 activists from 6 governorates (Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Basra, Najaf, Nasiriyah) of different religions, nationalities and minorities.

The workshop mainly focused on leadership skills, confronting violence and promotion culture of peace. The participants will implement various activities and events to support peace.

These activities come under the project funded by the Women's Fund for Peace and Humanitarian Action, with the support of UN Women.



Babylon authorities step up engagement in promoting women's participation and surmounting the challenges standing in their way



Babylon, 4 July 2021 - The local government in Babylon issued a set of special decisions for the purpose of implementing the recommendations that came out of the meetings and

seminars of the Sawtuha Network for Women Human Rights Defenders regarding promoting women's participation and surmounting the challenges standing in their way.

The Governor of Babel, Dr. Hassan Mandeel, agreed on implementing training workshops for health sector workers on human rights and culture of non-discrimination and promotion of the principles of cooperation, tolerance and humane interaction, with the participation of civil society organizations in the Human Trafficking Committee and monitoring of trafficking cases that women are exposed to in particular, with the cooperation of civil community organizations.

The approval of the local government in Babel on some of the recommendations of Sawtuha Network is a positive indicator credited to the civil society, women in particular.

Strengthening of cooperation and communication between women's institutions to achieve the best possible goals that serve Iraqi women at all levels

Erbil, 6 July 2021 - With the aim of strengthening of cooperation and communication between women's institutions to achieve the best possible goals that serve Iraqi women at all levels, a workshop was recently implemented in Erbil, which covered activities and events to encourage close cooperation between the cadres employed by these institutions.

Field visits were also made to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Abused Women Shelter, and the institutions of the Ministry of Interior concerned with hotlines and combating violence against women in the Kurdistan region, to share experiences

and to build on the learned lessons.

The workshop was implemented by the UN Women in Iraq, in cooperation with the Department of Women

Empowerment in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Council for Women in the Kurdistan Region.



UNFPA organized a training on GBV tools standards

Baghdad, 4 July 2021 - To emphasize on the importance of the referral system of gender-based violence survivors and to ensure that GBV tools are used properly to safeguard safety and confidentiality of survivors, UNFPA with funding from Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete organised a training on GBV Tools Standards to 16 participants from the Ministry of Health.

The training aimed at involving participants to tackle the issues and the gaps regarding the referral system, as well as further efforts to open additional centres where quality services are provided for survivors.

In a related activity, UNFPA conducted a three-day workshop, with support from Denmark and Sida for 25 health



workers at the Directorate of Health and from different NGOs in Anbar to enhance the capacity of gender-based

violence case workers in the health sector and also building capacity of government health workers.

Public bazar held in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 05 July 2021 - In coordination with Kirkuk Governorate's Directorate of Youth, IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team worked together with 23 women from the community to organize a public bazar. The women, who had previously participated in IOM accessory-making workshops, used the opportunity to sell their handmade work to community members. The event was attended by upwards of 75 people – including the Governorate's Coordinator of Youth and Sport – and included an MHPSS awareness session focusing on mental health and well-being.

This event was supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



Training on the guidelines of mental health and psychosocial support, self-care and the provision of informed care to respond to trauma held in Erbil

Erbil, 7 July 2021 - To support specialized and non-specialized mental health and psychosocial support response services to the survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) including integrated GBV and livelihood capacity building programmes, UNFPA - with funding from the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) - organised a three-day training for 47 case managers, social workers and outreach teams in the Kurdistan Region on the guidelines of mental health and psychosocial support, self-care and the provision of informed care to respond to trauma.



Female Genital Mutilation: an infringement on morals and rights



Erbil, 22 July 2021 - "Come with me, we need to go to the bakery - my mother told me one morning," said 53-year-old Dania*. "That day, I experienced fear, deception, and excruciating pain. I was only seven," she recalls of the day she underwent Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The practice of FGM is a social norm that is perpetuated by deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and myths that instill fear in the minds of the people. It is not only a practice rooted in gender inequality but is also a practice that limits girls and women from realising their rights and potential in health, education and income.

Despite strong advocacy against it, the FGM continues to occur in some parts of Iraq, mainly in the rural areas in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Dania* was seven years old when she was circumcised in her native Sulaymaniyah. It is a day she has not

forgotten: "I remember everything: the smell, the pain, the screams, the blood that was coming down on my thighs," she says of the traumatic experience and unbearable pain.

"We arrived at the bakery, my mom took me to the back room where there was an old stove. I saw an old woman holding razor blades. I remember that old lady and my mom holding me down. Words cannot express the pain and confusion I felt. It took a few seconds and I saw blood coming down my thighs. The lady then put coal on my genitalia", she explains.

FGM comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It can cause heavy and extremely painful menstruation, infertility and constant infections.

Furthermore, FGM has no scientific

benefits, and no matter if advanced tools are used or not, it is still painful and harmful for women and girls: this practice meddles with ordinary body capacities, including physical, mental and sexual wellbeing. Regardless of whether it is acted in a more secure manner; in facilities by medical professionals rather than a conventional cutter, it is still an infringement of the major clinical morals and the central rule of giving the best medical care conceivable.

"To date, I don't understand why I had to go through this experience. My mother never justified her actions and felt the need to guide me through this painful process. FGM is not a religious act, nor a medical one... it is just a baseless cultural practice that aims at shaming women since their young age based on their sex", she adds. "I will never do this to my daughter".

Dania is one of the hundreds of girls subjected to FGM on a yearly basis in the Kurdistan Region. UNFPA and the Kurdistan High Council for Women Affairs, with support from the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) are working on changing the behaviour of mothers regarding female genital mutilation through a communication behavioural plan.

Today, 46 years later, Dania is a vocal advocate for ending harmful practices in the Kurdistan Region. She continues to work tirelessly to change mentalities and perceptions: "FGM is child abuse and violence against women and girls. By conducting genital mutilation and other harmful practices, we are robbing our daughters of their right to their sexual and reproductive rights", she concludes.

Sometimes the best remedy is having someone understand your pain

Duhok, 27 July 2021 - The trauma Yazidi women suffered from is unmeasurable. Time and investment into their recovery is a must to help them reintegrate into society and move forward.

UNFPA, with funding from Canada in Iraq and the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II), continue to support the Duhok health and treatment centre for women to help them recover from the different forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and help them improve their mental health.



“I learned how to claim my rights that I didn't know I had”

Baghdad/Duhok, 27 July 2021 - “The information and knowledge I gained from this session helped me develop my level of thinking and provided me with tools to protect my family”— said one of the participants in an awareness session organized by Baghdad Women Association (BWA) in Kabarto camp in Duhok. The session aimed at enhancing the ability of women and girls to respond to gender-based violence and provided them with legal information to preserve their rights. The session covered gender-based violence with all its dimensions including the causes of violence, types of violence, roles of males and females in eliminating violence and its impact on families, children and the society. 12 IDPs (women and girls) attended and benefitted from this session. “I learned how to claim my rights that I didn't know I had”— stated a participant who attended an awareness



session conducted by Baghdad Women Association in cooperation with Harikar Organization. The session focused on gender and social roles, types of violence, its impact on the family and ways to reduce and eliminate violence. Other topics discussed included laws related to women and the family including the

personal status law, marriage, divorce, custody, and differentiation. 12 women from the displaced, refugee and the host community attended this session. These activities were done under project “Women, Peace and Security in the Arab Countries - Phase II” funded by the government of Finland in partnership with UN Women.

Norway renews commitment to women and girls with NOK 20 million to UNFPA programmes in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 July 2021 - The Government of Norway granted NOK 20 million (US\$ 2.35 million) to UNFPA to scale up the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) with a focus on the most vulnerable women and girls across Iraq.

The new funding will contribute to the improvement of GBV services including refurbishment of targeted women safe spaces and community centres, making them friendly for women with disabilities. The project will also support male engagement in GBV interventions and increasing awareness about women's rights in camps and areas of returnees.

UNFPA will continue strengthening the capacity of civil society partners in providing high-quality services to girls and women with disabilities including GBV referrals and people-centred counselling.

Commenting on the contribution, the Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of

Norway in Jordan and Iraq, Ms Rita Furusetth Sandberg said: “UNFPA is an important partner in the work to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, a priority area for Norwegian humanitarian support. Increasing awareness of SGBV and improving assistance for survivors of violence are key objectives to reach the most vulnerable”.

“Norway’s support is pivotal in ensuring no one is left behind. This new

commitment not only includes direct interventions for girls and women but also encompasses engagement and dialogue with boys, men and families all together on the importance of ending gender-based violence,” said UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia on the recent funds. “UNFPA is thankful to Norway for its trust in our mandate and partnership; together we will continue to serve those who need it the most”.



UNFPA with support from Canada in Iraq, organizes psychosocial support and recreational activities to young girls in the most rural areas across Iraq

Baghdad, 01 August 2021 - Adolescent girls are an undiscovered resource. When in conflict, their potential and contributions are at stake

and they become vulnerable. UNFPA, supported by Canada, is organizing psychological and social support and entertainment activities

for girls in the most rural areas across Iraq to increase their knowledge of their rights, bodies, and to shape their future.

Directorate of Survivors Affairs: a new umbrella institution created by the landmark law that will cover all aspects of the reparations process for female survivors

Baghdad, 2 August 2021 - The Free Yezidi Foundation today commemorated 7 years since the ISIL genocide against the Yazidi people with a panel discussion of the recently passed Law on Yazidi Female Survivors, which officially recognizes acts of genocide against Yazidis and other minority groups and establishes a framework for the provision of financial support and other forms of redress to survivors.

IOM Iraq Reparations Officer Sandra Orlovic spoke about the Directorate of Survivors Affairs: a new umbrella institution created by the landmark law that will cover all aspects of the reparations process for female survivors both inside and outside Iraq, from legislation to materialization of services and benefits. Plans are in place to open its first office



next month in Nineveh, though various obstacles to implementation – particularly a lack of funding – are stunting this process. When complete, the directorate will have offices in areas where survivors are concentrated, such as Sinjar, Telafar, and Duhok.

Based on global experience and expertise in supporting governments with mass reparations programs, IOM Iraq and partners continue to support the Government of Iraq with the challenging task of implementing the law in an efficient and survivor-centric manner.

Proper data collection and storing information ensures the privacy, safety and confidentiality in dealing with sensitive information of the GBV survivors



Baghdad, 8 August 2021 - Proper data collection and storing information on gender-based violence cases are imperative to ensuring the privacy, safety and confidentiality in dealing

with sensitive information of the survivors.

UNFPA with funding from Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete conducted a case

management and data collection training to personnel from Family Planning Unit, Community Police, Legal Police and Higher Commission for Human Rights from Baghdad, Diyala and Kirkuk Governorates.

In a related activity, UNFPA with support from Sida and in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior provided two introductory trainings on gender-based violence and the concept of mental health and psychosocial support to 50 staff of the Ministry of Interior.

The sessions focused on developing capacities of the health sector, police and legal departments, as well as women empowerment and social affairs' staff.

Finish Ambassador visits UNFPA supported projects in Duhok

Duhok, 3 August 2021 - The Finnish Ambassador to Iraq, Mr Vesa Häkkinen, and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, met today with civil society representatives and young people with disabilities in Mosul. They spoke on engaging young people, especially the most vulnerable and those living in hard-to-reach areas in Nineveh Governorate, in youth volunteerism and providing them with access to reproductive health and gender-based violence services. They

also discussed with young people with

disabilities their challenges and needs.



KOICA, UNFPA; US\$ 3 million to assist survivors of gender-based violence in Nineveh and Kirkuk Governorates



Baghdad, 12 August 2021 - The Country Director of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Iraq, Mr Lee Dong Hyun and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, signed a two-year agreement of 3 million dollars, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Environment and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

This new grant will go towards assisting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), in particular, those affected by conflict-related sexual violence, in Kirkuk and Nineveh Governorates through the increase of access to comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support and other GBV related services.

The launch of the project was attended by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Dr Adel Al-Rakabi, the Acting Minister of Health and Environment, Dr Hani Mousa Badr, the Ambassador

of the Republic of Korea in Iraq, HE Jang Kyungwook as well as representatives from KOICA and UNFPA.

Speaking at the event, He Al-Rakabi highlighted the needs of survivors of violence and the need to further bolster the GBV response, referrals and follow-up. He welcomed the new contribution and called the international community to increase its support for women affairs in Iraq.

For his part, Dr Badr thanked Korea, and KOICA in particular, for their continued assistance to the health system in Iraq and the capacity development of medical staff; a support that is much appreciated especially as the country battles the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Korean Ambassador said: "The project launched today will give hope and recovery to women living in the northern part of Iraq. The beneficiaries

will know that Korean international community and the government of Iraq are supporting them closely. All of us should regard the voice of the beneficiaries as the highest priority, so that the result of the project may actually change the lives of the people."

UNFPA Representative expressed gratitude to KOICA: "With thanks to KOICA funding, UNFPA with the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health & Environment will reach more girls and women with GBV and Mental Health and Psychosocial support services. Together, we will strengthen the capacity of service providers in Nineveh and Kirkuk to allow comprehensive service delivery to survivors and build the capacity of the government medical staff for a coordinated multi-sectoral response to GBV prevention and response services."

The speeches were followed by two presentations from KOICA & UNFPA on the project implementation and expected results.



How to launch a successful online campaign?

Nineveh, 16 August 2021 - Asuda Organization enhanced the skills and capacities of 8 women through a training focused on "The role of social media and how technology affects digital campaigns". 8 women participated from the "Voluntary Community Support Group of Nineveh Governorate" and learned how to launch a successful online campaign by understanding the impact of social media and how to target the right audience, recruit influencers to support in reaching out to people and using tools such as OASIS to build the campaign. As a result, an online page was created by the women who participated in the training to launch campaigns and advocate for women



issues.

This activity was done in the village of Talsaqouf in Nineveh Governorate under project "Women, Peace and

Security in the Arab Countries - Phase II" funded by the government of Finland and in partnership UN Women.

Increasing the skills and capacities of members of operating room from various governorates



Baghdad, 15 August 2021 - Within the project to support women's roles in

security and peace in local administrative structures in the light of

Security Council Resolution 1325 and in partnership with the Women's Fund for Peace and Humanitarian Action, Bent Al-Rafedain Organization increased the skills and capacities of members of operating room from various governorates working on monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. 12 attended the workshop held in Erbil which focused on data collection, data analysis and reporting.

The activity was done under the Women, Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) project in partnership with UN Women and the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

A joint workshop on ethical and safe journalism held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 30 June 2021 - IOM Iraq and the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) held a joint workshop on ethical and safe journalism in Baghdad. The workshop included modules on human rights and ethical reporting practices, and a discussion on the impact that reporting may have on the safety and rights of individuals or groups. Writers and journalists representing various news channels and websites participated.

"It was a fruitful workshop where the media, both traditional and online, was discussed, as well as its impact on public opinion. The media considers its first responsibility to be towards society," said Wisam Al Mayali from

the Iraqi Media Network. The Ethical and Safe Reporting Workshop was funded by the

Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



Panel organized for women human rights defenders in Anbar



Anbar, 30 June 2021 - The Independent Electoral Commission should take deterrent measures to protect women candidates for elections

from the defamation campaigns they are subjected to, and the need to urge prominent figures from clan elders, clerics and parties to support women

political participation and change the prevailing stereotypical image in the society, in addition to organizing awareness campaigns that bring together government agencies and civil society organizations to support women electoral campaigns and education on the importance of electing women.

These recommendations were made by the participants in the panel discussion organized by Sawtuha Network for women human rights defenders in Anbar, entitled "The Advocacy Campaign to Support Women Candidates for Parliamentary Elections" with the participation of the Community Police, the Awqaf Directorate, the Director of Tribal Affairs, the Governor's Advisor, and a number of civil society organizations, institutions, media personalities and women candidates.

IOM Iraq commemorated World Day Against Child Labor



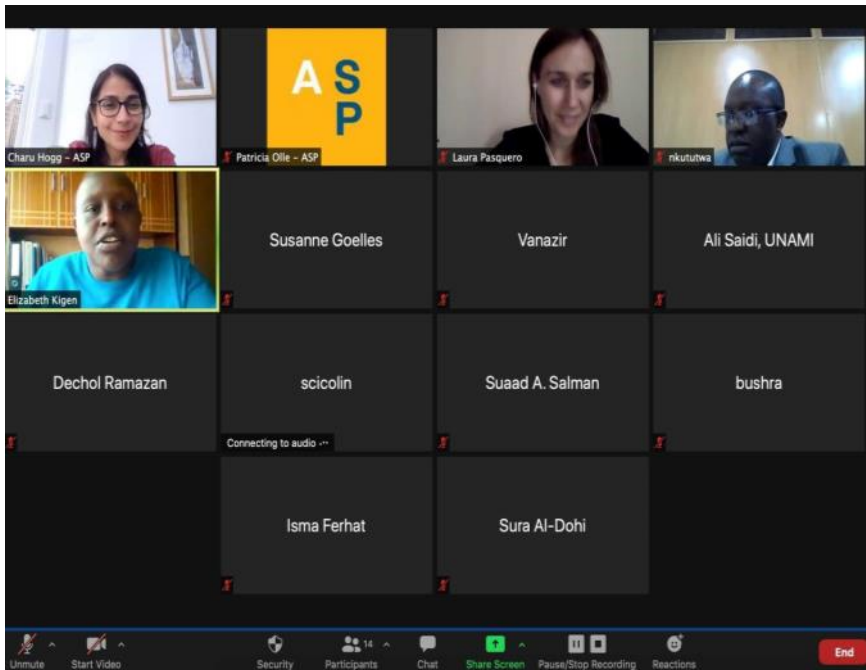
Kirkuk, 05 July 2021 - Child labor is any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is harmful to physical and

mental development.

This year, IOM Iraq commemorated World Day Against Child Labor by organizing a community event in Kirkuk Governorate’s Wahid Huzairan neighborhood. The event celebrated children’s rights to education, childhood and a better future, and highlighted action taken by caregivers, educators, activists, leaders and communities against child labor. 20 among those in attendance used the platform to present their efforts and showcase progress achieved in eradicating the practice, galvanizing attendees to continue working towards a better future for the area’s children.

This event was made possible with support from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

UNAMI Human Rights Office and All Survivors Project conduct workshop on conflict-related sexual violence involving men and boys



Erbil, 6 July 2021 – Today, UNAMI Human Rights Office and the All Survivors Project, an international NGO, concluded a two-day sensitization online workshop which explored the core principles and specific considerations for documenting conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against men and boys. The workshop was attended by 11 participants (8 women and 3 men) members of the UN Iraq Monitoring Analysis Reporting Arrangements (MARA) Technical Working Group and aimed to strengthen the capacity of human rights actors in Iraq on conducting ethical and safe monitoring and documentation of CRSV against men and boys, individuals who are sometimes excluded when monitoring and reporting CRSV. The workshop aimed to assist participants to address issues of CRSV against men and boys.

Iraq included into a global research on monitoring online hate speech

Baghdad, 13 July 2021 - Iraq has been included to the 5 pilot countries as part of a global research on Monitoring Online Hate Speech under the EU-funded #CoronavirusFacts project with synergies with the EU-funded project Social Media 4 Peace. The global project is partnering with the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford to develop a

methodology and tools aimed to detect emerging trends in online hate speech. This will be a resource for UN Country Teams in being able to understand the scope and react to the emergence of new hate speech trends in different contexts, in order to ultimately prevent atrocities in line with the UN Plan of Action on Hate Speech, reposit UNESCO.



Iraq launches a new 'Human Rights National Action Plan'



Baghdad, 26 July 2021 - At an event chaired by the Deputy Minister of Justice and organized with the support of the Office of the President and UNAMI Human Rights Office, Iraq publicly launched its new five-year Human Rights National Action Plan.

The Human Rights National Action Plan, prepared by the Ministry of Justice and endorsed by the Council of Ministers, seeks to harmonise national legislation with international human rights standards, strengthen national policies for the protection and promotion of human rights, and build human rights capacity within government institutions.

The Action Plan draws on many of the key observations made by UN Treaty Bodies during their ongoing dialogue with Iraq and also reflects the comprehensive recommendations made by UN member states during the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Iraq conducted in 2019.

Speaking at the event, the Deputy

Minister of Justice, Ziad Al Tamimy, said,

“The Human Rights National Action Plan further underlines the human rights commitments of the Government and provides a five-year roadmap for all the ministries and state institutions responsible for the protection of human rights in Iraq.”

In her remarks welcoming the adoption and launch of Human Rights National Action Plan, the Chief of UNAMI’s Human Rights Office and Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Danielle Bell, stated: “The need for strong and coherent action on human rights is more essential than ever. The Human Rights National Action Plan provides a solid framework for the legislative, policy and procedural reforms which can prevent human rights violations in the future and which will make a difference to the lives of all Iraqis”

The Human Rights National Action

Plan was presented at the event, followed by an interactive discussion among the participants. While participants strongly supported the launch of the Human Rights National Action Plan, they emphasized the criticality of implementation, noting that periodic assessment meetings and reports could help gauge the implementation status of the Plan.

The event was attended by 40 participants (21 men and 19 women), including government officials, Advisors to the Iraqi President, Members of Parliament, representatives of EU Advisory Mission in Iraq and non-Governmental organizations.

The full text of the remarks made by Ms. Danielle Bell are available here https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=14722:launch-of-iraq-s-human-rights-national-action-plan-26-july-2021&Itemid=730&lang=en



UNAMI regrets that the Council of Representatives was unable to select the Board of Commissioners of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)

Baghdad, 26 July 2021 - Chief of UNAMI’s Human Rights Office and Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Ms. Danielle Bell, in responding to an inquiry by CNN said the following:

“The Board of Commissioners of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) play a crucial role in the institution’s work to promote the principles of non-discrimination, fairness, equality, justice and inclusiveness in Iraq.

UNAMI regrets that the Council of

Representatives was unable to form the Committee of Experts to select new members of the Commission, thus delaying the appointment of a new Board of Commissioners.

UNAMI urges that immediate measures be taken to appoint the IHCHR Board of Commissioners in full compliance with Article 7 of the 2008 Law of the High Commission for Human Rights, and in accordance with the international "Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions" (The Paris Principles).”



Iraq: Ending torture through accountability, compliance and prevention – UN

Baghdad, 3 August 2021 – Full implementation of Iraq’s protective legal framework will help prevent torture and ill-treatment, thereby building public trust in the criminal justice system, notes a UN report published on Tuesday.

The report of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), entitled “Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: legal conditions and procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment,” seeks to prevent torture in places of detention in Iraq, including the Kurdistan region, by identifying and reducing risk factors and eliminating possible causes.

“No circumstances, however exceptional, justify torture or any form of impunity”, said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General. “I encourage increased efforts towards prevention and accountability, in line with Iraq’s obligations under international and domestic law”, she added.

The report covers the period of 1 July 2019 through 30 April 2021 and is based on interviews with 235 persons deprived of their liberty. More than half of all detainees interviewed by UNAMI/OHCHR for this report provided credible and reliable accounts of torture – consistent with patterns

and trends documented in the past by UNAMI and other organisations.

The findings show that most legal conditions and procedural safeguards which could prevent torture were routinely not respected. Concern is raised about the lack of effective legal oversight to address the realities of interrogation rooms and places of detention, which perpetuates a cycle of acquiescence and denial. The report notes a pervasive lack of access to defence; insufficient medical screening; lack of transparency concerning security entities with official powers of detention; and interrogations aimed at eliciting confession; coupled with concern that the existing mechanisms to address complaints of torture appear ineffective.

“The enactment of an effective legal framework criminalizing torture and implementation of independent national mechanisms for prevention and investigation, as set out in Iraq’s five-year Human Rights National Action Plan, would help address the persistent lack of accountability for perpetrators of torture,” said Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI’s Human Rights Office and the Representative for OHCHR in Iraq. “Compliance with legal obligations and procedural safeguards and the provision of effective remedies to victims of torture will promote change and build trust in the Iraqi legal system,” she added.

The report provides concrete recommendations concerning compliance with the protective framework set out in international and Iraqi law, training and review of the legal and policy framework, including interrogation rules and practices.

The report reflects ongoing UN engagement with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to promote and protect human rights in the administration of justice in Iraq.

The report is available at:

English: <https://bit.ly/2SKik56>

Arabic: <https://bit.ly/2Tj2Oxt>

Kurdish: <https://bit.ly/2TQCLhP>

Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq:

legal conditions and procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
August 2021
Baghdad, Iraq

Sinjar Atrocities

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “In living memory of the victims, I wholeheartedly reaffirm our support and solidarity with those who continue to bear the scars of monstrous inhumanity”

Baghdad, 2 August 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated at the virtual 7th Annual Commemoration of the Yazidi Atrocities organized by Yazda. Here is the text of her remarks:

“Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking you for the opportunity to address you on this solemn occasion.

As we all know: the recent history of Sinjar has witnessed unimaginable suffering. The atrocities remain vivid in our collective memory, a trauma carried to the present day by Yazidi

victims and their families.

The crimes committed by Da’esh, which include forced marriages, abductions, sexual slavery, rape, and other forms of extreme violence amount to genocide.

Compounding the indignity was the fact that victims often returned to destroyed or unsafe homes or had to reside in camps or informal settlements with family members missing or dead.

Years later, survivors still face immense challenges. While they urgently need to rebuild their lives, unnecessary obstacles continue due to discord on security arrangements, public service provision, and a unified administration.

Now, the inability of parties and authorities to set aside differences for the greater good, particularly in such a traumatic context, is frankly unconscionable.

Ten months ago, an agreement was reached on administrative, service and security arrangements in the Sinjar district.

Together, the Federal and Kurdish Regional Governments took an important step in the right direction, laying the groundwork for stability, improved safety and better living conditions.

And of course, the passing of the Yazidi Survivors Law in March 2021 was a

Iraq: Ending torture through accountability, compliance and prevention – UN

major development, helping address the issues faced by survivors. It provides for reparations, care for survivors and their rehabilitation into society.

Right now, however, more must be done. Progress has been unacceptably slow in improving governance and unifying the administration. And the harsh reality is that these roadblocks are holding progress hostage, with the long-suffering Sinjaris paying the price. In the spirit of continued solidarity with the residents of Sinjar, the UN has remained actively engaged on the implementation of the agreement.

And I can only emphasize our readiness and commitment to help all stakeholders move towards a normalized, sustainable situation on the ground.

Frankly, it is past time to reach consensus on stable governance and security structures, thereby expediting reconstruction and facilitating safe and



dignified returns.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On this occasion, in living memory of the victims, I wholeheartedly reaffirm our support and solidarity with those who continue to bear the scars of monstrous inhumanity.

Now, as I said, the continued suffering must be eased without delay. I

therefore call, yet again, upon all stakeholders to URGENTLY put the interests of the people first, and thus to empower a single, unified administration in Sinjar.

No one has forgotten what happened seven years ago, and the world is surely watching today.

Thank you and blessings to all.

UNAMI reaffirms full solidarity with the families who lost their loved ones and pay tribute to the inspiring bravery of the survivors of the Sinjar massacre



Baghdad, 2 August 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for political affairs and electoral assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, participated today at the virtual 7th Annual Commemoration of the Yazidi Atrocities organized by the Free Yazidi Foundation. Here is the text of her remarks:

“Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear panel members,

On this solemn occasion, let me thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Free Yazidi Foundation panel.

On behalf of the United Nations, let me

begin by recalling that the United Nations have not forgotten those who lost their lives in August 2014 or whose whereabouts remain unknown to this day.

Seven years later, on this seventh annual commemoration day of the Yazidi atrocities, we reaffirm our full solidarity with the families who lost their loved ones and pay tribute to the inspiring bravery of the survivors.

As you all know, last October 2020, an agreement was reached between the Federal and Kurdistan Regional governments on administrative, service and security arrangements in the Sinjar district, which entered into force

in November 2020.

The Sinjar Agreement was an important step in the right direction to create a conducive environment for stability, security, and better living conditions for the Yazidis and all communities of Sinjar - to put the Sinjari people's interests first.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

To date, representatives of the Federal and Kurdistan Regional governments continue to engage on the Sinjar Agreement's security provisions. A joint committee has been formed to identify potential recruits for the local police.

In this regard, security provisions of the Sinjar Agreement, such as the full withdrawal of all non-state armed actors and their replacement with Iraqi federal forces and local police, have begun but have not yet been fully implemented.

Progress on administrative and reconstruction provisions has unfortunately also been limited thus far. Parties continue to express their willingness to come to the table, but sustainable progress will remain elusive without institutionalized, regular, structured dialogue. It's due time to walk the talk.

We all know well that lasting peace,

UNAMI reaffirms full solidarity with the families who lost their loved ones and pay tribute... *(continued)*

development, and prosperity will not be delivered overnight. Yet, a critical first requirement is a stable governance and security framework. Almost everything rests on this foundation.

In a spirit of continued solidarity with the Yazidis, United Nations Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert remains actively engaged with Baghdad and Erbil and has visited Sinjar district several times to follow up on the Sinjar Agreement's implementation and engage with the Sinjari communities.

Thus, the United Nations continue to encourage the Federal and Kurdistan Regional governments and all relevant stakeholders to put aside partisan interests, overcome differences and place the needs of the people above all and do so without further delay.

In this context, reaching an inclusive consensus to establish stable governance and security structures without delay, facilitating the safe and

dignified return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their homes and the reconstruction of affected areas, remains one of the United Nations priorities. And I can only emphasize our readiness and commitment to help all stakeholders move towards a normalized, sustainable situation on the ground.

Regarding reconstruction and development in the Sinjar district, the United Nations believe that speeding up reconstruction in affected areas would enable the safe return of displaced people in the Sinjar district as a first step to overcoming deep tragedy.

The United Nations continue to provide humanitarian and development support in the Sinjar district. UN Agencies, Funds and Programs have also embarked on supporting survivors through psychosocial support, legal services for missing identification and legal documents, reintegration efforts,

local community reconciliation, and reparations.

From our field point of view, the humanitarian and development work at grassroots levels in Sinjar aims to help alleviate the suffering and bring communities back and together. Particularly successful have been projects for agriculture, rehabilitation of houses and villages such as Kocho, schools, and other development and cultural projects, including solar-powered wells, which have been welcomed by the Sinjari communities.

However, the large and sheer scale of needs and investments required go beyond the United Nations mandate. The Sinjar district will need the tireless efforts of all stakeholders, including relevant governmental authorities, to rebuild the infrastructure for better provision of basic services in the future such as water, electricity, housing and health.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Seven years on: rebuilding Sinjar, restoring dignity

Sinjar, 3 August 2021 – Huddled around a 100km-long mountain range in Northern Iraq, Sinjar was once known for its rich cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. The district's main city also called Sinjar, and surrounding areas were home to over 400,000 people. This included most of the world's Yazidi population.

However, on this day, seven years ago, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launched a devastating attack on Sinjar. A gruesome act that will be forever deeply engrained in the city's memory. The Yazidi community was subjected to mass murders, sexual abuse, abduction, torture, forced conversions, and enslavement of thousands, particularly of women and girls. This massacre was later recognized by the United Nations as a genocide against the Yazidis.

Today, over 118,000 people have returned home to Sinjar. On the seventh anniversary of the massacre, we hear from the people of Sinjar on what it means to build back their lives and restore dignity.

Dawood Sulaiman Al Bashkani, 41, religious leader based in Tal Banat: "We need to re-establish the trust between people who are returning. This requires for all of us to work together and ensure all services and infrastructure rebuilt serves them

equally."

Samira, 22, Resident of Sinjar city: "Yazidi women have faced so much trauma. We need more support for us to recover fully from the past. I could not complete my education because of the conflict. Now that my family and I have returned, we are looking for ways to skill ourselves to work and generate income for the household."

Sharaf Nayef Rashko, 52, Head of Agriculture Department: "Out of the 900 farmers in Sinjar city, only 40 have returned. For us to create a stable environment for people to return, we need to support them to cultivate their land and regenerate their livelihoods." He went on to say that Yazidis in Sinjar need full support for them to feel secure enough to return in a dignified manner.

Hasan Alyas, 39, resident of Tal Banat: "When I returned, I came home to a destroyed house and farmland. It has taken my family a lot of courage to return home and attempt to rebuild our lives. Many of the others are unwilling to return because they fear the same thing will happen again. This year I started cultivating my land. I hope this motivates my neighbors to return home."

Since 2016, through the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), UNDP has been supporting the people of

Sinjar through rehabilitation of essential infrastructure and services, along with providing short- and medium-term livelihoods opportunities. To date, the programme has rebuilt three electricity networks, four water systems, two police stations, four health care centers, 14 schools and 165 homes. In addition, FFS has provided employment opportunities to over 580 people in the region, renewing hope and helping them regain their dignity.

For the families that choose to return, rebuilding their lives has brought immense challenges. Many have little to sustain themselves as their savings run dry, homes remain torn down, and livelihoods destroyed. On the other hand, half a million remain displaced. To support the people of Sinjar, rebuild sustainably, continuous support from the Government of Iraq and the international community is required. This is needed to restore infrastructure, services, and livelihoods while also re-establish trust and safety.

On this day and every day, UNDP stands in solidarity and remembers the victims of the devastating Sinjar massacre. Stabilization efforts must continue. UNDP reiterates its commitment to support the people of Sinjar and all communities in Iraq rebuild their lives with dignity after the ISIL conflict.

Seven years on from Sinjar massacre, VR film honours victims and advocates for the Yazidi community's recovery

Baghdad, 3 August 2021 - August 3rd, 2021 marks the seventh anniversary of the Sinjar Massacre. The Islamic State, also known as ISIS or Da'esh, systematically targeted ethnoreligious minorities residing in Sinjar and the Nineveh Plains. Soon after capturing those areas, ISIS committed a pattern of premeditated atrocities against the Yazidi people. UNITAD established "clear and convincing evidence that the crimes against the Yazidi people clearly constituted genocide."

Seven years on, much still needs to be done to support the Yazidi community's recovery. Genocide prevention and meaningful reconciliation require education, awareness-raising and advocacy, but due to frequent exposure, traditional forms of advocacy are reportedly losing their impact. In response, a multi-disciplinary team came together in 2019 to develop the 'Nobody's Listening' virtual reality (VR) exhibition, an innovative advocacy tool using VR technology to present, educate and remind people of the

magnitude of the Yazidi genocide.

In late 2020 and early 2021, the VR exhibition was presented in five cities across Iraq, engaging over 120 attendees. Today we are pleased to present a short film capturing that experience and a report that investigates the impact of the VR exhibition (Arabic and Kurdish versions of the report will be available at the same link soon).

August 3rd is a day to stand in solidarity with communities in Sinjar and honour the victims of the massacre. Continued advocacy is necessary to address the outstanding needs of the Yazidi people and promote efforts towards justice and reparations; administration and security governance issues must be resolved; and dedicated support is vital for the area's returnees. Humanitarian assistance must continue for Yazidis still in displacement — for those unwilling or unable to return, alternative durable solutions must be explored.

Projections of the 'Nobody's Listening' VR film were organized by IOM Iraq



and Yazda, with financial support from USAID. The Nobody's Listening team wish to thank the Digital Cultural Heritage Research Group at the Sulaimani Polytechnic and its Nahrein Network partner; the UNESCO Chair on Genocide Prevention Studies – University of Baghdad; the Cultural Factory in Sulaimani; Erbil Polytechnic University; and the University of Duhok.

Supporting the Iraqi Government's efforts to ensure accountability and protect human rights remains a priority of the United Nations years on: rebuilding Sinjar, restoring dignity

New York, 3 August 2021 - Statement attributable to the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General - on the anniversary of the 2014 ISIL attacks on Yazidis and other communities in Iraq:

"Today marks seven years since the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) brutally targeted the Yazidis in northern Iraq. Thousands of Yazidis were subjected to unimaginable violence on account of their identity, and until today, many remain in displacement camps or are still

missing. These heinous acts committed by ISIL may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Full accountability of their perpetrators remains essential.

Supporting the Iraqi Government's efforts to ensure accountability and protect human rights remains a priority of the United Nations, in accordance with the collective responsibility to protect communities from the most serious crimes under international law.

Recognizing the pain and courage of the

Yazidis, recovery and rehabilitation remain a priority. The Secretary-General therefore commends the recent enactment of the Yazidi Survivors Law by the Government of Iraq and its recognition of the crimes committed by ISIL against the Yazidis and other communities. He encourages its swift and full implementation.

On this somber anniversary, the United Nations remains fully committed to supporting all efforts to achieve accountability and justice."

UNITAD

UNITAD continues to provide technical assistance to the Government of Iraq

Baghdad, 28 June 2021 - As part of its ongoing cooperation with the Government of Iraq UNITAD provided two Chemical Fume Hoods to the Medical Legal Directorate DNA Laboratory in Baghdad today. The Hoods will be used for preparation of DNA samples from remains of victims excavated from ISIL mass graves.



UNITAD held a workshop on mass graveyard exploration



Baghdad, 5 July 2021 - UNITAD investigative team held a two-day workshop over the end of last week on

mass graveyard exploration and re-remains operations in the presence of the Iraqi Department of Forensic Medicine, Mass Cemetery Affairs and representatives from the regional government Kurdistan and the International Committee for Missing Persons.

This and the workshop's discussion on best practices and lessons learned, as well as planning for future activities, where UNITAD investigative team

praised the ongoing work to identify the remains of ISIS victims and support their return to Bury Karim.

UNITAD investigative team also thanked the support of the Chairman of the National Coordinating Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Luqman Fily, who attended part of the workshop, and also thanked the representatives of the National Coordinating Committee who participated in the workshop.

UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum convenes its second biannual plenary roundtable

Baghdad, 13 July 2021 - The UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum held its 2nd Biannual Plenary Roundtable meeting Tuesday. The Forum brings together dozens of Iraqi and international NGOs to discuss issues of relevance to UNITAD's mandate.

During the virtual discussion, Ms. Sareta Ashraph, Director of Field Investigations and Officer in Charge-UNITAD, updated NGOs on the progress of UNITAD's work over the past six months and outlined key priorities for the second half of 2021. She emphasized that the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum provides a platform for enhancing cooperation and regular dialogue between UNITAD and the NGO community, and complements the operational cooperation which is a crucial aspect of cooperation with the NGOs. As of today, UNITAD has concluded over 40 Memorandum of Understandings with partner NGOs working with UNITAD's Field Investigation Units.

Ms. Ashraph highlighted the findings presented in the sixth report of the Special Adviser to the Security Council, concluding that ISIL's crimes against the Yazidi community constituted genocide. In the same report, UNITAD

has determined that there is clear and convincing evidence of ISIL's commission of war crimes, as well as of the crime of direct and public incitement to commit genocide, at the Tikrit Air Academy massacre, often referred to as Camp Speicher.

Looking ahead, Ms. Ashraph explained that UNITAD will continue its investigations of crimes against the Yazidis from other areas of Sinjar, particularly north Sinjar. She also stated that toward the end of 2021, UNITAD expects to deliver an initial case file on ISIL's use of biological and chemical weapons; as well as further case files in relation to crimes against the Christian and Sunni communities, as well as crimes committed against those imprisoned at Badoush Prison in June 2014.

During each plenary meeting, a survivor speaker is invited to take part in the meeting, bringing the perspective of survivor groups. This meeting, a woman Yazidi survivor briefed the Forum on challenges and issues affecting Yazidi victims and survivor groups, while sharing best practices of her own engagement with UNITAD's Field Investigation Unit 1, the unit which works on ISIL crimes

UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum: Second Biann...



against the Yazidi community. The speaker emphasised the importance of delivering justice and reparations to victims, expediting excavation of mass graves, rescue of missing family members and the reconstruction of destroyed homes. Dr. Caroline Buisman, head of Field Investigation Unit 1, applauded the important role played by NGOs supporting the work of her team and feeding into the preparation of case files.

In the plenary discussion, NGO participants exchange views, experiences and lessons learned. They also discussed the challenges to the pursuit of accountability for ISIL crimes.

UNITAD took part in a virtual event organized by Free Yazidi Foundation

Baghdad, 3 August 2021 - Head of UNITAD Office of Field Investigations, Sareta Ashraph at Free Yazidi Foundation's virtual event explored more details about investigative efforts of the Team's FIU1 and Gender and Children's Unit in establishing clear and convincing evidence of Genocide against the Yazidis.

She explained the range of resources of UNITAD investigations be it survivor accounts, national authorities, mass grave excavations, Yazidi organizations, records of #ISIL itself, reaffirming UNITAD's commitment to continue investigations into ISIL crimes against the Yazidis.

Ms. Ashraph asserted UNITAD's

commitment to provide foundation for accountability which renders visible the full gamut of victims and survivors and the full range of crimes against them. She indicated UNITAD's main finding will serve to found basis for domestic prosecutions.



UN Network on Migration in Iraq joins call for improved efforts to combat trafficking in persons

Baghdad, 29 July 2021 — World Day Against Trafficking in Persons is observed every year on 30 July to “raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights.” The United Nations Network on Migration in Iraq joins the global call to end the scourge of trafficking in persons (TiP).

This year’s theme — Victims’ Voices Lead the Way — highlights the importance of listening to and learning from survivors of human trafficking. Survivors are key actors in the fight against human trafficking. As such, they play a crucial role in establishing effective measures to prevent this crime, identify and rescue victims and support them on their road to rehabilitation.

Two important reports released this year provide an overview of the global scale of the problem. The latest UNODC Global Trafficking in Persons report underscores the fact that victims are targeted when they are vulnerable or marginalized, while the U.S. Department of State’s 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report notes that the COVID-19 pandemic created conditions “that increased the number of people who experienced vulnerabilities to human trafficking and interrupted existing and planned anti-trafficking interventions”, as governments around the world diverted increasingly stretched resources towards the public health crisis.

As the extent of COVID-19’s impact on the global economy is revealed, rising unemployment rates are likely to lead to an increase in instances of trafficking as vulnerable individuals get targeted for forced labour.

The State Department report classified Iraq as a Tier 2 Country – one that is making significant efforts to comply

with the standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 — and recommended measures to:

1. Ensure trafficking victims are not punished for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit.
2. Protect victims from re-traumatization during trial.
3. Amend the anti-trafficking law to ensure that a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion is not required to constitute a child sex trafficking offense.
4. Significantly increase access to adequate protection services for victims of all forms of trafficking and their children.
5. Prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers by all armed groups and provide appropriate protection services to demobilized child soldiers.

The report also highlighted successes, including the Government of Iraq’s efforts to convict more traffickers and bolster the Ministry of Interior’s anti-trafficking directorate with additional funding and staff; and the Kurdistan Regional Government’s establishment of specialized anti-trafficking police units in each of its governates.

“The UN Network on Migration supports the international community’s overall efforts towards the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM),” said Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, and Resident Coordinator. “Under the GCM, which is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration, Objective 10 focuses specifically on prevention and eradication of trafficking in persons. The Network will continue to support and encourage



all progress towards this objective in Iraq.”

In recent years the Government of Iraq has made important strides towards improving its migration policy framework, notably through the development of a National Migration Strategy that sets out recommendations to address areas of migration policy and governance that are lacking. Strong policies, victim-centred approaches and institutionalised victim protection measures will be vital in the fight against trafficking in persons.

The Network in Iraq is coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and counts the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR); the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the World Food Programme (WFP); the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS); the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF); and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as members. It will meet regularly with representatives from the Government of Iraq.

WFP and the Ministry of Trade have launched the Tamwini (‘My Food Ration’) smartphone application

Najaf, 24 June 2021 - WFP and the Ministry of Trade have launched the Tamwini (‘My Food Ration’) smartphone application in Najaf governorate! The app allows you to update your family information for the Public Distribution System for food rations (PDS), directly on your phone.

As well as providing a practical, time-saving solution for families and staff, the Tamwini app is especially useful in

a governorate such as Najaf, where some communities live far apart, and updating personal family data means longer journeys to PDS offices. Together with our partners, since July 2020 we have successfully trialled Tamwini in two neighbourhoods in Baghdad and Mosul. Now, the roll-out to 1.6 million people in Najaf is a milestone towards expanding across the country.



UN-Habitat finished vocational trainings in Dokry



Mosul, 24 June 2021 – Today, UN-Habitat partnering with a Japanese NGO, Peace Winds Japan, completed all of vocational training courses in Dokry village in Sinjar with funding from the Government of Japan, under the project titled “Support to

Reconstruction and Peacebuilding of Liberated Cities in Iraq – Phase III”. Courses have targeted 100 unemployed returnees and included electrical wiring and civil works for males, and house painting and maintenance for females.

IOM supports Government of Iraq with capacity building for returnee reintegration in Ninewa



Erbil, 30 June 2021 — With technical assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and support from the Government of Australia’s Department of Home Affairs, the Government of Iraq has developed a referral system operated by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD); it links returnees in Ninewa Governorate to local reintegration service providers based on need.

A key step forward for Iraq’s implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and growing national capacity in migration governance, the free and confidential referral system can be accessed by anyone living in Ninewa who has returned from abroad or was displaced due to conflict. It will support sustainable reintegration through a whole of government and whole of society approach, linking people to local services including those

that resolve housing problems; provide vocational training; and support to enroll children in schools.

Services are to be provided by state programs, local Civil Society Organizations, national and international NGOs and international organizations. The reach and scale of the system will grow as more service providers join in; there are also plans to scale up to other governorates.

With IOM’s technical support, MoMD has developed a basic electronic case management system, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and trained more than 150 field staff who are responsible for operating the system.

During a series of open days in late June at MoMD offices in Mosul, Hamdaniyah, Sinjar and Telafar, returnees and the wider community were invited to learn about available services, meet local officials in branch

offices and ask questions.

“Improving returnees’ access to services as they rebuild their lives is crucial for the reintegration process,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “Through this referral mechanism, MoMD officials will be able to identify relevant services provided by civil society, governmental entities and local or international organisations that can support.”

IOM Iraq’s technical input to referral mechanism in Ninewa is a part of a larger effort to help government institutions build their capacity, improve conditions for sustainable return and reintegration, and strengthen national migration governance in Iraq. The MOMD office in Mosul provides an operational base for a range of new institutional initiatives that will increase Government capacity. The office was built by IOM Iraq in 2020, with support from the Government of Australia.

The referral system represents a significant development in cooperation between MoMD and the government’s Ministry of Interior which oversees the Community Policing network — including Referral Guidance Centres; Women’s Legal Counselling Offices; and Housing, Land and Property Assistance Centres. Coordinating the service and resources available under both ministries means comprehensive support can be provided in a manner that respects each ministry’s areas of expertise.

A joyful and productive summer vacations

Erbil, 05 July 2021 - Engagement of beneficiary families and their children is essential to the successful implementation of house rehabilitation projects. To ensure that children can have a joyful and productive summer vacations, UN-Habitat has distributed promotion material kits including a soccer ball, painting books and

colouring pencils among children of households who benefitted from rehabilitation of houses in Erbil, Dohuk, Sumel, Mosul and Sinjar.



A football tournament in Eitha village to support the reintegration of returnees after years of displacement

Baghdad, 05 July 2021 - In collaboration with the Reconciliation Committee of Eitha, IOM Iraq's Social Cohesion and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) programme kicked off a football tournament in Salah Al-Din Governorate's Eitha village this week. The activity is part of efforts to support the reintegration of returnees after years of displacement.

The tournament brings together 20 teams 180 players comprised of young

men from returnee and host community families. Young men from the whole area will participate in the tournament, which will encourage them to build relationships, connect around a shared interest, and feel engaged in the community, thus contributing to social cohesion and the reintegration of the returnee families.

This tournament was made possible with support from the Government of Germany.



Over 29,500 internally displaced persons in camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq receive civil identification documents

Erbil, 6 July 2021 - After a temporary halt of operations due to COVID-19 restrictions, the issuance of civil documentation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Kurdistan Region of Iraq resumed earlier this year.

The federal Ministry of Interior (MOI) has successfully processed 29,593 applications for documents that include Nationality Certificates and Civil Identity Cards during the five missions to 12 IDP camps in Duhok. Documentation is a key need among IDPs which enables them to access assistance and services, whether in their area of displacement or when they return.

“Missing civil documents prevented my son from finding a proper job for years. He applied to the committee, and a few days later he received his documents and now he is very hopeful for the future”, Amina said.

The civil documentation project was carried out in cooperation with UNHCR legal Partner Harikar and Barzani Charity Foundation in charge of camp management.

“ID documents are important for all people. Lack of documentation for IDPs and returnees severely impacts their ability to access education, healthcare, and employment, in addition to

freedom of movement.” said Philippa Candler, UNHCR Representative in Iraq. “Obtaining an ID card is their first step into building a better future,” she added.

UNHCR appreciates the role of MOI in processing the documentation requests effectively, and of the Kurdistan Regional Government for hosting the IDPs.



Erbil, 14 July 2021 - Today, the UNHCR Representative a.i. Ms. Nicole Epting paid a courtesy visit to the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR), Kurdistan Regional Government KRG and met with H.E. Safeen Dizayee, the Head of DFR.

DFR and UNHCR discussed bilateral cooperation and coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government entities and the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

UNHCR expressed appreciation for the generosity and support provided by KRG to the refugees and IDPs in KRI.



Erbil, 27 July 2021 - The UNHCR Representative a.i. Ms. Nicole Epting met with H.E. Reber Ahmed Khalid, the Minister of Interior, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). They discussed mutual priorities and the ongoing cooperation and coordination between UNHCR and the KRG. The Minister of Interior and UNHCR Representative a.i. also discussed the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. UNHCR expressed its appreciation for the generosity and support provided by KRG to refugees and the internally displaced people in the KRI.

Germany, IOM strengthen partnership for evolving humanitarian response in Iraq



Baghdad, 22 July 2021 - During the ISIL conflict, an estimated six million Iraqis were displaced. Thousands of families have returned to their areas of origin since the end of the crisis, but unstable conditions in Iraq have caused a significant shift in the country's humanitarian situation. As country-wide camp consolidation and closure processes move forward, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are reckoning with the complex experiences of premature return and secondary displacement. Returnees residing in hotspots of severe living conditions and IDPs living in strained camps and informal sites are in urgent need of adapted humanitarian assistance.

As a part of its ongoing support for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, the Government of Germany will provide

additional multi-year humanitarian funding that will better position IOM to adapt and rapidly implement its intervention strategy to address the evolving needs of the affected populations while remaining flexible to respond to sudden onset crises.

The latest grant from the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO) supplements an ongoing IOM Iraq project launched in March 2020. In addition to enhancing visibility, this multi-year humanitarian funding allows for longer-term planning and programme continuity. This is crucial, as remaining populations facing protracted displacement are in need of sustained assistance until solutions to their displacement are found.

"This funding from the German Federal Foreign Office is not only generous, it is flexible and will extend over the years

to come," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "This will enhance IOM's capacity to pursue a holistic and sustained response to the displacement that corresponds to the scope of urgent need in Iraq."

The funding will be used to implement a broad range of humanitarian activities, from camp management in formal and informal sites to specialized, community-based protection and mental health and psychosocial support services both in- and out-of-camp. For those living in sub-standard or damaged shelters, funding will provide immediate relief solutions for improved safety, protection and living conditions. Interventions will also provide non-food item assistance and support primary health care centres to ensure accessibility and quality of essential services.

"Germany remains committed to the needs of internally displaced persons in Iraq. The broad range of individual IDP situations requires tailor-made solutions. We want to give partner organisations as much flexibility as possible so they can adapt to changing situations on the ground and live up to their ambition to deliver humanitarian assistance in accordance with priority needs," said Chargé d'affaires Peter Felten of the German Embassy in Iraq. "We are very happy to continue our partnership with IOM in this regard."

Continuing support from the Government of Germany enables IOM Iraq to respond to pressing humanitarian needs while also working to determine root causes of and durable solutions to displacement, thereby facilitating the safe relocation or return and reintegration of IDPs into their communities.

UN-Habitat assesses damaged and destroyed houses to be rehabilitated and reconstructed in Tal Banat village in Sinjar

Sinjar, 23 July 2021 - UN-Habitat is currently finalizing an assessment of identifying damaged and destroyed houses to be rehabilitated and reconstructed in Tal Banat village in Sinjar for the project titled "Emergency Support to Returnees in Iraq after the Outbreak of COVID-19" funded by the Government of Japan. The project is expected to directly benefit more than 1,600 vulnerable individuals returning to Sinjar. Work of rehabilitation and reconstruction is expected to be completed by March 2022.



Rebuilding homes, rebuilding life



Anbar, 27 July 2021 - When ISIS occupied Anbar Governorate's Karma district, many houses sustained extensive damage.

For Hashem, this was one of many losses he suffered: his brother was killed by ISIS and his father died as a result of a deteriorating psychological and health condition.

Hashem and his family fled the bombings and battles in 2014, escaping to Fallujah district before crossing into Baghdad Governorate and settling in the city of Al-Haswa. There, he was able to lease a house but struggled to pay the rent. He worked for daily wages as a construction worker to make ends meet and cover his family's expenses.

In 2019, Hashem returned to his house in Karma district and was shocked by the extensive damage he found. He did not have the financial means to restore it. He tried to adapt to the situation and lived with his family in their damaged house for a year.

IOM Iraq's shelter team arrived to assess and rehabilitate the house, rebuilding the roof and restoring doors, windows, water, electricity and more. Hashem and his family were happy to

have a safe and dignified home to live in again.

As displaced families continue to return to their areas of origin from across Iraq, some arrive to find their homes uninhabitable and in a state of destruction. Among them is Mashkour Mahmoud, who in 2014 was displaced from the neighborhood of Al-Laheeb in Baghdad's Abu Al-Ghraib district.

Mashkour and his family were forced to leave everything behind in their search for safety, relocating several times over the next four years to escape ISIS. This dire situation was made worse by Mashkour's heart disease, which he

attempted to manage amid the constant instability. In 2018, he and his family settled in the town of Al-Haswa, finding housing in an agricultural area where they paid rent with the help of donations, having lost most of their material possessions when they fled in 2014.

Mashkour dreamed of going back to his home in Al-Laheeb and living a stable life. He returned to his empty house to make this a reality but was shocked at the extent of destruction he found. Stunted by poor financial conditions, local services could not rebuild the house, and Mashkour had to return to Al-Haswa.

IOM Iraq's shelter team stepped in to assess the damage and rehabilitate his house, rebuilding its roof, installing doors and windows, connecting it to water and electricity networks and clearing it of the harmful insects that roamed freely in the family's absence.

Mashkour returned once again, this time finding his house completely restored. He and his family were happy to return home at last.

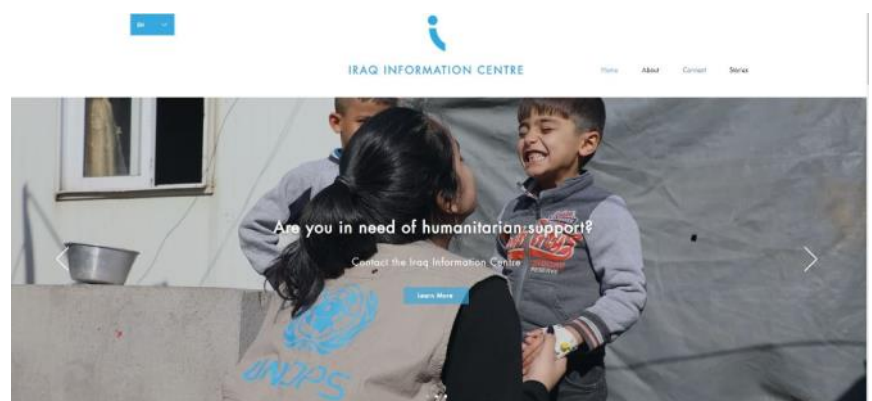
Both rehabilitation projects, and many others were funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian assistance.



Introducing the Iraq Information Centre

Baghdad, 1 August 2021 - The Iraq Information Centre acts on behalf of the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team to link affected populations and humanitarian actors, empowering communities through the provision of accessible and timely information on how to access the services and resources required to improve their situation, fulfilling their right to know, to ask questions, and to participate in their own recovery.

Learn more about IIC at <https://bit.ly/3rxhHJI>



USA contributes USD 53.3 million to UNHCR operations, supporting the internally displaced and refugees in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 August 2021 - UNHCR welcomes the generous contribution of USD 53.3 million by the Government of the United States of America (USA) towards UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes to support vulnerable displaced persons (IDPs) and Syrian refugees in Iraq. This contribution brings the total USA contribution to UNHCR Iraq in 2021 to USD 88 million. Thus far, the UNHCR operation in Iraq is 35% funded.

There are over 247,000 Syrian refugees and 1.2 million IDPs currently living in Iraq. For these vulnerable families living through protracted displacement under dire living conditions, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn has been remarkably severe.

This timely donation will enable UNHCR to support the refugees and IDPs with life-saving services. The services include, among others, protection interventions covering legal protection and registration services, child protection, the prevention of gender-based violence, and community-based protection, in addition to camp

management, education support, and the rehabilitation of infrastructure, schools, and health facilities.

"The U.S. Mission in Iraq is proud of its long-standing support of UNHCR in Iraq. Our contributions to UNHCR reinforce our commitment to the Iraqi people for voluntary, sustainable, long-term solutions for those citizens who suffered under ISIS and now seek to return home and rebuild their lives," said U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Matthew H. Tueller.

"The tough economic situation had

significantly impacted the lives of refugee and IDP families. However, the continuous and reliable support from the USA helps us continue providing life-saving assistance, which can be a lifeline for these families", said Nicole Epting, UNHCR Representative a.i.

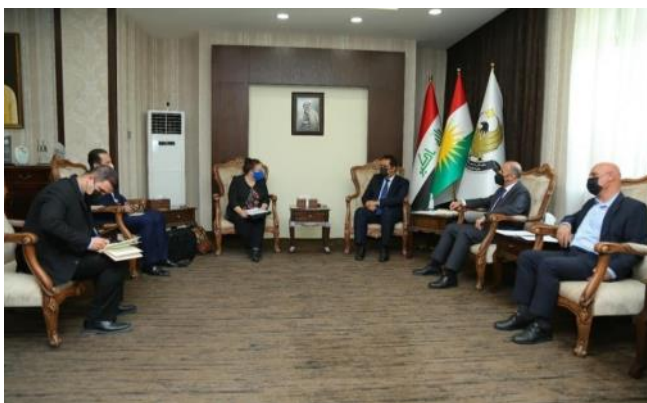
UNHCR is grateful for the generous and long-standing support of the United States to UNHCR globally. This support means that UNHCR can continue to offer protection and pursue durable solutions for internally displaced people and refugees in Iraq.



UN-Habitat Iraq implements the project "Emergency support to returnees in Iraq after the outbreak of COVID-19" in Sinjar

Sinjar, 6 August 2021 - UN-Habitat Iraq is currently implementing the project titled "Emergency Support to Returnees in Iraq after the Outbreak of COVID-19" in Sinjar funded by the Government of Japan. It is estimated that more than 30,000 individuals will benefit from the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged or

destroyed houses, improved WASH facilities and delivery of vocational training. The project aims to reach the most vulnerable, especially women, supporting them to rebuild their homes and livelihoods.



Erbil, 29 July 2021 - The UNHCR Representative a.i. Ms. Nicole Epting met with H.E. Alan Hama Saeed, the Minister of Education, Kurdistan Regional Government. The Minister of Education and UNHCR Representative discussed bilateral relationship and coordination on refugee education as well as the overall humanitarian situation in the Kurdistan Region. UNHCR expressed its appreciation for the generosity of the Kurdish people and the support provided by KRG to refugees and the internally displaced people.



Duhok, 9 August 2021 - Nicole Epting, UNHCR Acting Representative in Iraq, visited Duhok and met with our staff in the UNHCR Duhok Office, local authorities and visited Domiz 1 refugee camp.

In the camp and during her visit, she visited the newly established vaccination unit and met with refugees and health staff. She also visited the UNHCR registration center, then met community leaders and Community Outreach Volunteers and partner staff at UNHCR/SWEDO's Community Centre in the camp.

The Republic of Korea donates US\$800,000 towards health, water, sanitation, education, and protection interventions for the most vulnerable children in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 August 2021 – The Republic of Korea has donated US\$ 800,000 towards UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal (HAC) in Iraq.

This contribution will support the water, sanitation, education, and child protection services provided by UNICEF for thousands of children in Iraq especially the most vulnerable who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The children in Iraq continue to suffer from the effects of the past conflict and current the hardships imposed by the current COVID-19 global pandemic and economic hardship," says UNICEF

Representative in Iraq, Ms. Sheema Sen Gupta. "Thanks to this generous support, from the Republic of Korea, UNICEF can continue to provide key services for the most vulnerable children in Iraq, reaching them with protection wherever they are and nurturing their learning."

This support will go a long way in advancing UNICEF's work across the country and providing children, young people, and their families with access to quality education, water, sanitation, and protection services which are vital as Iraq recovers from decades of conflict and the current pandemic.



UNDP Iraq supports the Iraqi Government to prepare communities for reintegration of returnees from Al-Hol Camp

Erbil, 18 August 2021 – UNDP Iraq in partnership with the Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD) and National Security Advisory, with participation of several government officials, has brought together 74 community and tribal leaders from Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Diyala governorates in a workshop aimed at fostering acceptance and understanding among local leaders to facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis back into their communities.

Focusing on families returning from Al Hol camp, the comprehensive workshop builds on UNDP Iraq's community-based reconciliation and reintegration programming to ensure the safe and dignified return and reintegration of Iraqis displaced by the conflict with the Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL). The workshop included discussion of

the government efforts on the return of IDPs from the camp and the role of community leaders and local government in facilitating the reintegration of those IDPs in their original areas.

In May, 94 families staying in Al-Hol camp were transferred to Al-Jada'a Rehabilitation Camp in Ninewa Governorate. UNDP Iraq is working with the Iraqi Government to ensure community readiness for acceptance of these families and more that will follow, in line with the Iraqi Government's priority to ensure displaced Iraqis return to their places of origin. Among the unanimous recommendations, attendees agreed to support the government's plan to return displaced Iraqis, including commitment of the government to perform background checks on the returnees and provide necessary

services and compensations to those who have been affected by the conflict with ISIL.

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad emphasizes, "Ensuring communities are prepared to accept families who return home following displacement is vital to sustainable reintegration. UNDP Iraq is committed to preparing communities for this transition to implement durable solutions for peace and social cohesion in Iraq."

The Deputy Minister of Migration and Displaced, Mr. Karim Hussein Ali Al-Nuri states, "This meeting was very important because we heard from the local leaders and tribes regarding their support for the return of IDPs who have no security issues. We would like to continue this dialogue and discussion to facilitate the return of IDPs."

According to Dr. Saeed Al-Jiashi, Advisor, National Security Advisory, "We achieved good progress during this meeting and reached a conclusion, including that we organize visits to the Al-Jada'a Rehabilitation Camp, and proceed to move families back to their areas of origin."

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq. The Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project supports the community readiness, return, and reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, who are often the most marginalized and vulnerable.



US Consul General visited Debaga Camp for internally displaced Iraqis

Erbil, 19 August 2021 - On the occasion of World Humanitarian Day the US Consul General Robert Palladino visited Debaga Camp for internally displaced Iraqis.

He was received by Barzani Charity Foundation camp management and Director of the Erbil Directorate of Management and Crisis Response, and representatives of UNHCR, IOM Iraq, SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization and MercyCorps. He met with the humanitarian agencies and listened to a general brief from UNHCR.

He later visited the Community Centre managed by SWEDO, water and sanitation activities by Mercy Corps and a Primary Health Clinic run by

IOM.

At the Community Center, the Consul General met with displaced persons

including community outreach volunteers and discussed their hopes and challenges.



Germany supports WFP's critical assistance to displaced and refugee families in Iraq

Baghdad, 26 August 2021 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has received a €6 million contribution from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) to support WFP's monthly food assistance to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) and Syrian refugees living in Iraq.

WFP monthly food assistance to displaced families and refugees has become more critical with the rise in food prices and the devaluation of the Iraqi currency as the country grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic effects.

This contribution is part of the Germany's multi-year commitment to WFP to ensure no one is left behind.

"We share a common responsibility to support those in need, especially refugees and the displaced, and we value that Iraq and in particular the communities in Duhok and Sulaymaniyah have taken in so many families who had to leave their homes," said Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the German Embassy in Baghdad Annika Boltendruschmann. "We consider WFP's cash transfers a flexible means of assistance that also benefits the host community and small businesses through buying locally."

WFP provides most of its monthly assistance to vulnerable families through cash transfers, through practical 'mobile money' solutions – where families receive cash assistance via mobile phone and can also use it electronically at local stores or – in the

case of people living in camps – through electronic vouchers that can be redeemed in camp food shops. When such electronic solutions are not possible, for instance in areas where there is no network coverage, WFP provides through its partners direct cash assistance.

In addition, WFP distributes ready-to-eat food parcels for families who have to be quarantined as part of COVID-19 measures. These rations have also been useful in the past months following tragic fires which occurred in camps in Duhok and Sulaymaniyah.

"Germany continues to be a key partner for WFP in Iraq," said WFP Representative in Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. "As one of WFP's few partners to make multi-year contributions,

Germany's leading example enables WFP to plan its assistance this and next year, to best meet the food requirements of families in need. We thank the German government and people for their support at this critical time."

Alongside ongoing emergency operations, WFP is expanding resilience-building and livelihoods activities across the country, to help conflict-affected families and communities create and sustain work opportunities. These are particularly needed as families continue to return home from camps, or settle in new areas. Germany is also a staunch supporter of these endeavours, through its Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



A new sheep market opened in Ba'aj

Ba'aj, 01 July 2021 - Ninewa Governorate's Ba'aj district was one of the areas most affected during the IS conflict. The area is famous for livestock trading.

IOM Iraq coordinated with municipal authorities in Ba'aj to hold an opening ceremony for a new sheep market. The project will create 163 new job opportunities and benefit more than 60,742 people – mostly returnees.

This project was made possible with support from Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and KFW German Development Bank.



High-level ministerial and UN delegations inaugurate FAO's activities in Nineveh Governorate

Baghdad, 5 July 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held the inaugural ceremony of dairy processing, marketing, and micro-enterprise centres established under the project Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.

The official opening ceremony was attended by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Mithaq Abdul-Hussein, the Deputy Minister of Migration and Displacement, Mr. Karim Hussein Ali Al-Nuri, the Deputy Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojackova-

Sollorano, the Representative of the Minister of Water Resources, Mrs. Samira Alshabib, the Representative of the Minister of Planning, Mr. Bassem Dari Mahmoud, the Representative of the Nineveh Governor, Mr. Ali Al-Qaba, the Director of Agriculture directorate in Nineveh, Dr. Rabie Youssef Elias; the Director of the Veterinary Services in Nineveh, Dr. Uday Al-Abadi, the President of the agricultural Local Union/Cooperative Associations and the FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El-Hajj Hassan as well as 600 farmers and livestock producers among the project beneficiaries.

During the Ceremony, the government officials participated to the distribution of the first batch of dairy equipment aiming to improve the quality of milk production of nearly 4,000 families,

including women's groups, and distribution of sugar molasses to support 5,000 livestock producers in various districts and sub-districts of Nineveh Governorate.

Senior officials also attended the inauguration of two rehabilitated village small/medium-scale milk collection centers and visited a farm in Hamdaniya district, where the cultivation of green fodder crops such as sorghum and Alfalfa were introduced for the first time.

FAO Representative, Dr. Salah El-Hajj Hassan, in his opening remarks, underlined that Nineveh governorate is a key strategic region for food production in Iraq, and among the governorates with the highest rates of returnees, following the liberation of Mosul. He said "Contributing to rebuilding Iraq's agriculture sector, as it is a major provider of employment and income in rural and peri-urban areas is an essential element for the development of the country.

FAO investment in agricultural livelihood and value chains development in Nineveh will help food insecure households to produce much-needed food, generate jobs, diversify income and reduce their dependency on humanitarian assistance. The introduction of new agricultural practices, including in-country production of green fodder, will not only bring potential economic benefits but also will have high nutritive value" and concluded by thanking all authorities and the EU for the generous contribution.

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Mithaq Abdul-Hussein in his speech, appreciated the coordination



High-level ministerial and UN delegations inaugurate FAO's activities in Nineveh Governorate *(continued)*

between FAO and Nineveh Agriculture Directorate, including the capacity building of extension staff who are supporting the implementation and successfully transferring their technical knowledge to the beneficiaries.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojackova-Sollorano expressed appreciation for the event and the role of women in agriculture and in the project as major

driver of change.

The Deputy Minister of Migration and Displacement, Mr. Karim Hussein Ali Al-Nouri, reiterated the importance of FAO project as a real supporter for the stability of displaced families, through their return to the areas of origin; while the Director of Nineveh Agriculture Dr. Rabie Youssef Elias emphasized the adoption of modern technologies for greater sustainability.

FAO Senior Livestock Officer, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, concluded by thanking

the project team, in particular the Extension Officers of the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate, who were able to transfer the technical knowledge to the beneficiaries for a sustainable livestock production systems.

Finally and on the sidelines of the ceremony, the President of the Local Union of Agricultural and Cooperative Societies - Nineveh Branch, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Fathi Al-Rashidi, thanked all actors working to improve the agricultural sector in Iraq.

IOM, KOICA partner to support local economic recovery in Baghdad, Ninewa and Kirkuk

Baghdad, 7 July 2021 — Decades of conflict in Iraq coupled with the COVID-19 outbreak have severely affected human capital, intensified poverty, and undermined individuals' ability to find decent and sustainable jobs. The consequences of conflicts are especially severe for vulnerable returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities who continue to need access to livelihoods opportunities and recovery initiatives.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) will extend its support to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through a USD 5 million grant; with this funding from KOICA, IOM Iraq will contribute to local economic recovery and community resilience in Iraq through increasing access to sustainable and decent work. The overall objective of the project is to support job creation, entrepreneurship and the growth of small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as to encourage productive employment, including for women.

"During the ISIL crisis, millions were displaced and local economies were destroyed; the loss of livelihood opportunities and the lack of vital services in areas of origin are clear obstacles to return for those who remain in displacement across Iraq," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "This partnership with KOICA will reinforce IOM's efforts to address protracted displacement and create the conditions for sustainable returns."

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic struck the globe, youth unemployment has become more serious than before. Especially in Iraq, the ISIL crisis and COVID-19 have had a catastrophic impact on society," said KOICA Chief Director Mr. LEE Dong Hyun. "We

hope this project will contribute to recovery from the socioeconomic damage done to Iraq's vulnerable populations."

The project's interventions will target the most vulnerable sections of the population in Baghdad, Ninewa and Kirkuk, with a focus on durable solutions for IDPs, specifically access to livelihoods and employment. The grant will also go towards helping businesses in conflict-affected areas recover from the damage suffered, re-start their operations, and offer much needed jobs to the local community.

To facilitate the creation of sustainable job opportunities, IOM Iraq will offer vocational training; farmer training; on-the-job training; and support for the establishment or expansion of micro-businesses through business support packages. Sustainable job opportunities will be created by supporting SMEs with grants through the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF). In addition,

IOM Iraq will utilize a referral system to match individuals who are identified and trained in the individual livelihood assistance (ILA) component of the project with employment opportunities created via the businesses supported under the EDF.

IOM's approach includes a strong element of community participation, especially in initial engagements with the community, to determine livelihood needs and priorities. The project will also ensure that women are supported to meaningfully engage in mainstream economic recovery and development in Iraq.

Under the project, IOM will work closely with the Government of Iraq as well as with local authorities, community, religious and tribal leaders, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders to mitigate challenges related to limited economic opportunities and limited access to essential services in the targeted areas.



Iraq makes strides to develop poultry and tomato sector strategies

Baghdad/Nineveh/Basra, 8 July 2021 - Sector-focused consultations to support sustainable and inclusive development in the poultry and tomato value chains in Iraq were held in Basra and Mosul on 4 July 2021.

These consultations will be instrumental in elaborating national strategies for the two sectors. The poultry and tomato sector strategies will serve as a compass for the Government, private sector and development partners to improve the competitiveness of farmers and small and medium enterprises in these two sectors, contributing to the national pathway towards sustainable food systems, inclusive growth and job creation for Iraq citizens. Aligned with national planning frameworks, the strategies will specify clear priorities eventually producing a concrete five-year plan of action (2022-2026) that will not only define roles for implementing institutions but also provide an implementation management framework.

Public sector and private sector representatives including farmers, input suppliers, processors, wholesalers, traders and retailers and agri-support business services participated in the consultation sessions. They discussed the current situation and the future opportunities in developing the tomato and poultry value chains. The sessions provided a platform for engaging into realistic priority setting based on understanding market trends and requirements, and for discussing how inter-institutional cooperation can be improved to provide the necessary enabling environment for sustainable growth of the sector.

The International Trade Centre is facilitating the elaboration of the poultry and tomato sector strategies within the framework of the European Union-funded project, “Strengthening



the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq” (SAAVI) under the leadership of the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Eric Buchot, who leads the International Trade Centre project in Iraq said, “As we work with our partners to strengthen agribusinesses in Iraq, we are grateful for the opportunity to hear from representatives of the government and private sector including farmers. The most effective way for the private sector to make its contributions is as part of such integrated and comprehensive strategic approach that involves government, food chain partners and development agencies.”

The EU Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Martin Huth said “The European Union is committed to work with the Government of Iraq to ensure better job opportunities for all Iraqis. Consultations with stakeholders are an important component of project design and the views of government, the private sector, farmer associations, civil society and business support organizations are essential. Our efforts, especially project activities, must fit the local context well and support the needs of stakeholders.”

Earlier, in Baghdad, the first sector core team meeting was also held with representatives from Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade, along with private sector stakeholders including farmers associations and chambers of commerce. The sector core team will provide leadership and guidance during the sector strategies design process.

These consultations build on approximately 18 local group consultations that were held with farmers and small businesses including women-owned businesses in Ninewah, KRI, Basrah, Thi Qar.

More than 500 competitiveness surveys focusing on agribusinesses and farmers have been completed throughout the country. Over 3000 interviews were conducted at the national level with consumers as well as with representatives from various stakeholder groups, such as traders, wholesalers and retailers, to help better understand market demand, identify areas of improvement and market opportunities.

Another round of national level consultation for tomato and poultry sector strategies will be conducted in early September.

Enhancing agricultural development will facilitate Iraq’s accession to WTO

Baghdad, 9 July 2021 – A workshop on “WTO Accession and Agriculture” was organised from 4th to 7th July 2021 in Baghdad.

Agricultural development consistent with WTO standards needs enhancement in Iraq for facilitating the negotiations leading to the accession process.

The workshop provided a comprehensive overview of the agriculture sector as perceived within

the WTO and the Agreement on Agriculture and its pillars.

Representatives from various government institutions from Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq including officials from the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry participated in the workshop.

The workshop was organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC) a joint agency of the World Trade

Organization (WTO) and United Nations (UN), through “Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy in Iraq” (SAAVI) project.

Funded by the European Union (EU), the project is contributing to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth, by improving Iraq’s agriculture competitiveness and supporting trade development. It is also particularly focuses on providing

Iraq Enhancing agricultural development will facilitate Iraq's accession to WTO *(continued)*

support to Iraq in the process of acceding to the WTO.

Mr. Adel Almasoodi, Director General, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Trade opened the workshop and reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to the accession to the WTO and assured the support of his team to the SAAVI project.

H.E. Martin Huth, Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq and Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the United Nations Resident Coordinator to Iraq were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, H.E. Martin Huth, Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq said, "The EU has a strong interest in Iraq acceding to the World Trade Organisation in order to bring Iraq into the illustrious WTO group of 164 states. WTO accession, and the economic reforms that it entails, represents a clear opportunity for Iraq to implement the goals of the White Paper. Being a full member of the WTO, will allow Iraq to improve its collaboration on trade and investment with all WTO members and ultimately support the creation of decent work for all Iraqis"



Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the United Nations Resident Coordinator to Iraq said, "The drive for economic reform, including political commitments in resuming the WTO accession process with a clear roadmap, is a clear signal of a better future awaiting Iraq."

The workshop included sessions from experts from WTO, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Trade Centre. In

addition the trade policy technical team from the International Trade Centre, Geneva, including Mr. Jean-Sébastien, Senior Officer for Policy and Business and Ms. Devika Rajeev, Associate Programme Officer, were present in Baghdad to facilitate the workshop.

This workshop is the first in a line of capacity building sessions that will be organised through the SAAVI project to support Iraq to accede to the WTO.

Employment, environmental sustainability and public sector digitization: innovative projects launched in Karbala Governorate



Baghdad, 12 July 2021 – Three innovative projects focusing on environmental sustainability, jobs for unemployed youth and digitization of the public sector have today been launched by the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq in partnership with the Governorate of Karbala.

The project launches reaffirm UNDP Iraq's commitment to supporting communities in Karbala, and included:

- Job Matching for Karbala Youth which provides long-term sustainable employment for Karbala's youth by working closely with the private sector to explore their employment needs. Under this project, youth will undertake training and have access to internship and employment opportunities in the

private sector based on market needs.

- Karbala GIS Mapping System which digitally transforms the public sector, enhancing the quality of public services provided to citizens in Karbala. A data dashboard for Governorate officials as well as a mobile application for residents to access public services online are key features of this project.

- Karbala Composting Pilot which will promote environmentally sound waste management in Iraq by creating a value chain for compost for the private sector and encourage efficient management of sustainable production and utilization of compost. This project is led by UNDP Iraq with assistance from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and involves the Karbala governorate, private sector and local communities.

Joining the Governor of Karbala and Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq for the launches were the Federal Minister for Youth and Sport, Federal Minister for Communications as well as the UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG), Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

The Governor of Karbala, Nassif Al-Khattabi stated: "The local government in Karbala has had a long-standing partnership with UNDP. The partnership has supported the government's response

to COVID-19, establishing the Karbala data center and the smart Karbala mobile application. We have also worked together to improve access to jobs for young people within the private sector and tackling environmental challenges through sustainable solutions such as producing organic fertilizer from waste." "We stand committed to working with UNDP to complete these projects and launch newer initiatives towards achieving the SDGs." Al-Khattabi added. DSRSG in Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano who approved the funds for the composting project through the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund said: "We are proud to support this pilot composting project – a first in Iraq – which will use environmentally friendly methods and generate green jobs for communities in Karbala. Pending it's success, I look forward to seeing it rolled out across the country."

Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad added: "Today's project launches reaffirm UNDP's long-standing partnership with the Karbala Governorate in key areas affecting the community – particularly youth unemployment and efficient delivery of public services which many people have been vocal about in recent years. We look forward to seeing these projects materialise and subsequently meet the critical needs of communities in Karbala."

The Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator visits Salah al Din



Salah al Din, 11 July 2021 - The Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, traveled to Salah al Din to meet with the Deputy Governor of Salah al Din and the Mayor of Samarra. She met with the area-based coordination (ABC) working group in Salah al Din, which provides the nexus between humanitarian and development work. Efforts to support IDPs, returnees and host communities were discussed with all stakeholders. She further visited the Tikrit University and a World Food Programme project site. During her visit, she reaffirmed the UN's long-term commitment to support the Government of Iraq in its efforts to provide durable solutions for Iraq's IDPs. The mission included Head of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), WFP Iraq Deputy Representative, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Development Support Office (DSO). During her visit, the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian

Coordinator met with the Mayor of Samarra at the Samarra Archaeological City, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. She discussed the challenges the mayor is facing with Samarra being an area of particular concern with regards to economic growth.

While attending the ABC meeting Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano stated "The area-based coordination mechanism is an important piece of the puzzle to turn humanitarian needs into development goals in the Governorate of Salah al Din. It is essential to focus on social cohesion when making returns and reintegration of IDPs sustainable, but also when ensuring local integration"

The Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator also met with the President of Tikrit University. They discussed the critical role the University can play in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing higher education to future generations of Iraq, and through initiating and facilitating cross-sectoral dialogue and action, embedding the SDGs within all areas of teaching, research, operations and leadership,

and providing practical guidance to inspire further action.

The trip was concluded with a visit to Aziz Balad in Balad district, where WFP is supporting vulnerable returnees and the host community with livelihood projects and by rehabilitating agricultural lands. WFP is working with the local Directorate of Agriculture, Water Resources, Farmer's Association and Mercy Hands to help revitalize local agricultural production and supporting smallholder farmers. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano also met with beneficiaries at the site.

As 51-year-old Shweesh told Irena and the team, "I am growing green beans, cucumbers and sunflowers, to feed my family and make savings from selling the crops. So I can plant more next season." Shweesh has a family of nine: five children, and he supports his elderly parents who live with him too.

The projects – part of the UN's durable solutions work – are already benefiting from work done by WFP last year, rehabilitating canals in the area to support irrigation.



Youth entrepreneurship in Iraq to thrive in the agriculture sector

Mosul, 15 July 2021 - Holding a master's in agriculture economy from University of Mosul, Muthanna Khamees Rashid has a clear vision for his future.

He will soon launch an integrated fish and tomatoes greenhouse system. Issues of food security, access to fish and vegetables, and water scarcity in Mosul will be addressed through the solar powered system.

The training he had received on agronomy and business development in addition to seed funding has come in handy.



Youth entrepreneurship in Iraq to thrive... (continued)

Scaling in coordination with government for covering more cities is high on his agenda.

Understanding the challenges

However, Muthanna has not let his optimism and motivation blind him to the challenges that stand in the way of achieving his goals.

“Entrepreneurship is hard everywhere, but is even harder here,” he says talking to a group of trade experts and other young entrepreneurs.

Access to finance, ease of doing business and operational hurdles are some of the challenges that need urgent attention.

Women entrepreneurs need to be brought to the forefront by creating an enabling environment for them so that they can pursue diverse business ideas.

“We need to change the mindset and make people aware that they can become an entrepreneur in agriculture,” says Muthanna reaching out for the phone in his pocket.

Supporting Iraqi youth in agriculture
As Muthanna picks up his ringing phone, his face lights up with a smile. His first daughter is born and he shares this great news with everyone. He has found another reason to take his business to the next level.

Muthanna is one of the many young bright Iraqis working in agribusiness, who participated in a group discussion organized by the International Trade Centre’s team recently.

The discussion was held with the support from Oxfam’s Emergency Response innovation lab, established in

Erbil to support youth entrepreneurship.

Other bilateral meetings and multi-stakeholder consultations were also held last month with key actors in Baghdad, Mosul, Erbil, Basrah ahead of the implementation of the European Union funded project, Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq. (SAAVI).

Implemented by the International Trade Centre, the project will contribute to inclusive growth and job creation in Iraq, particularly for the youth. It is working to enhance the competitiveness of Iraq’s agribusiness value chain, while improving the country’s trade policy.

Strengthening the safety of hydraulic infrastructure



Baghdad, 26 July 2021 – The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Government of Italy are working together, in partnership with the Ministry of Water Resources, to build capacity in the safe management of Iraq’s national hydraulic infrastructure. Bruno Antonio Pasquino, Italy’s Ambassador to Iraq; Mahdi Rashid Al-Hamdani, Minister of Water Resources; and Kahdim Saher, the Director General of the State Commission of Dams and Reservoirs (SCODAR), spoke about the Dam Safety Skills Development Programme at a kick-off ceremony.

During the welcome remarks, SCODAR’s Director General Saher emphasized how “dams are considered one of the most crucial water facilities in Iraq. They are of strategic importance, especially considering that

Iraq is suffering from limited water availability due to decreased rainfall in recent years. Dams are also crucial considering the increasing demand for water and energy in light of the steady population increase and the rebound of different sectors of the Iraqi economy.”

Historically, Iraq’s extensive reservoir network has been at the heart of the country’s socio-economic development strategy. The state’s ability to deliver water as a basic service for irrigation and energy production is a crucial endeavour for Iraq’s stability and its sustainable development. In particular, hydropower is considered one of the main components of Iraq’s energy mix.

Ambassador Pasquino said, “Italy aims to support the Government of Iraq by enhancing the management of the Iraqi national hydraulic infrastructure of the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources through the implementation of this

UNIDO project.”

The project, funded by the Government of Italy, will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Water Resources in the form of skills training, and dam safety system advisory and technology transfer in order to establish a robust dam safety programme. This will enhance the capabilities of Iraqi engineers, technicians and decision-makers who will be able to make informed choices on the safety and effective management of Iraq’s hydraulic infrastructure. The project will pave the way for a National Dam Safety Programme through the establishment of a dam safety section within the SCODAR.

According to Minister Al-Hamdani, thanks to the implementation of this project it will also be possible “to optimize the quality of national hydraulic utilization and projects, which may have a significant impact on the economic, the social, the environmental and even the security aspects of the lives of the Iraqi people. Consequently, the need has become very urgent to develop a national dam safety programme to ensure the safe operation, continuous monitoring and periodic rehabilitation of the existing dams.”

Ambassador Pasquino concluded his remarks by reaffirming Italy’s willingness to support Iraq’s economic and social development via continuous capacity-building of Iraqi institutions through technology transfer and capacity-building programmes. He said, “Friends show up in times of need, of course, but stay on even when the pressing need is over.”

First joint seminar on Food Security in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 July 2021 - The World Bank and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) held a first joint seminar on Food Security in Iraq, with keynote speakers from the Government of Iraq, University of Mosul, and Iraq Britain Business Council. With a focus on Food Systems, the rich discussion was attended by a variety of partners active in helping deliver #ZeroHunger in Iraq. The panelists provided valuable insights on the Food System, and highlighted

challenges such as the need for robust and timely data, and how to overcome them.

All participants agreed on the need to engage and collaborate more with the private sector, and to take action now to mitigate the impact of climate change on Food Security in Iraq.

The World Bank & WFP are continuing to plan joint events and publish reports on Food Security with partners, particularly in the run-up to this year's #FoodSystemsSummit.



Power on: a neighborhood transformed

Mosul, 1 August 2021 - Before the break of dawn, at the beginning of 2017, 20-year-old Suhaib slipped out of his neighborhood in Mosul with his family and neighbors in search of a safer place. "I remember the day we fled clearly even today. We were scared for our lives," says Suhaib.

The ISIL conflict had forced over 180,000 families from east and west Mosul to leave their homes. Many of those lost their lives while fleeing. "I lost my father during the fighting," shares Suhaib.

Though when Mosul was finally liberated from ISIL, Suhaib and his family finally returned home to extreme devastation. It was estimated that 10 million tons of rubble engulfed the city, equivalent to three Giza pyramids.

Through strength and solidarity, the neighborhood came together to build back their lives step by step. "When we returned, my house was partly damaged. We helped each other by clearing out all the rubble," says Suhaib. A resident of Al Nahrawan neighborhood, he lives with his mother, six brothers and their families. "But what was difficult for us when we returned was that there was no water or electricity. It had been completely cut out."

The electricity was temporally restored three months after liberation but the power supply to the neighborhood remained weak. "We would only get power for a few hours in the day," Suhaib explains.

It was not easy. This meant that residents purchased generators as a makeshift solution. It added an extra burden and cost to the families. "The diesel-powered generators would provide hours of supply but for 5-10 times the price of electricity," says Suhaib.

Close to Suhaib, in Al Warshan neighborhood, lives 48-year-old Amar Nafi, "I would charge lamps during the hours we got electricity so my children could study after sundown." Amar knew that a more sustainable solution was required to fulfill the community's



growing power needs.

To support Moslawis build back their city, through the Funding Facility for Stabilization, UNDP rehabilitated the two substations in Al Warshan and Al Nahrawan. These substations serve over 60,000 people.

"We have come so far since liberation. Look at this substation! It was heavily damaged during ISIL. And now, it is back up and running," says Mohammed*, Employee at Al Nahrawan Substation. "I am proud to work here and serve the residents of Mosul, ensuring electricity reaches them so they can do their day-to-day chores and run their businesses."

To date, 39 substations that were destroyed during the conflict have been restored in Mosul through the programme. In addition, UNDP also rehabilitated Amar and Suhaib's houses. *name changed upon request

The quality of life has drastically improved for residents in the two neighborhoods. "Life is different for us after the electricity has been fully restored. My children can study," says Amar. Today, the cost of electricity is around US\$ 20-40 every month. A price Amar and Suhaib are happy to pay for the quality of services received.

For residents like Amar and Suhaib, having access to electricity has eased the

daunting process of rebuilding their lives after one of the most brutal conflicts in Iraq's history. It has made enduring the Iraqi summer and carrying out daily chores more manageable for the families. More importantly, it has become a symbol of resilience, hope and solidarity for the entire community.

Four years since Mosul's liberation from ISIL, Amar and Suhaib's story prove that durable solutions such as restoring basic services are key to sustainable recovery.

UNDP's flagship programme in Iraq, the Funding Facility for Stabilization restores essential infrastructure and services in the liberated provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din. To date, the programme has helped 13.2 million Iraqis access critical services and infrastructure, half of those are women.

Implemented through the programme, the rehabilitation of the two substations in Al Warshan and Al Nahrawan was supported by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The restoration of Amar and Suhaib's house was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided through KFW Development Bank.

Iraq: New partnership to improve public sector governance, increase private sector participation, and rebuild human capital

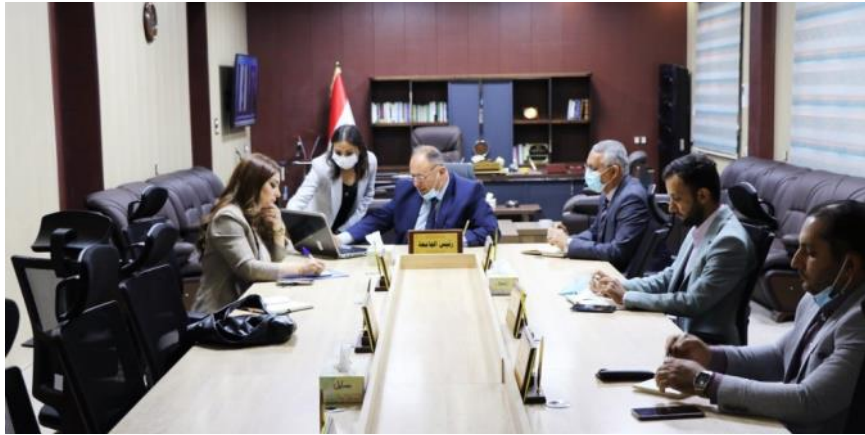


Washington DC, 5 August 2021 — The World Bank Group has renewed its commitment to the continued support of Iraq, approving a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) to form the basis of its 2022–2026 partnership with the country. The framework lays out the main development goals the World Bank Group aims to support in Iraq and proposes a series of strategic interventions to help Iraq respond to the ongoing pandemic crisis, reform the economy and rebuild human capital. The new framework comes against a background of highlighted fragility in Iraq, where the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, volatility in oil prices, and growing climate risks have compounded existing challenges. Such challenges could lead to more instability but also provide an opportunity for a new government to realign the country's priorities by moving forward on economic reform and tackling deep structural issues. "With its inherent flexibility, the CPF will serve as a platform for the World Bank Group to address immediate needs of the poor and most vulnerable, and work on the causes and drivers of Iraq's fragility and crises," said Saroj Kumar Jha, World Bank Mashreq Regional Director. "The Bank Group is ready to support the people of Iraq by contributing to tackling corruption, building transparent and accountable institutions, and a more enabling public sector for improved business environment in Iraq." The CPF has been drawn up in keeping with the World Bank Group's 2020–2025 Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence. The Strategy allows the World Bank Group to continue to engage with countries during periods of

conflict and violence in order to help them transition out of crises more successfully. The CPF is aligned with Government of Iraq (GOI) reform priorities listed in their programs and national strategies, and promotes the renewal of the social contract between citizens and the state, as well as fostering a healthy local private sector and strengthening the legitimacy and capacity of core institutions. "This CPF's foundations are aimed at improving governance, public service delivery, and private sector participation, and at strengthening human capital," said Ramzi Afif Neman, Head of World Bank Iraq Office. "In this way, we get to mainstream our priorities—citizen engagement, gender equality, and responding to climate change." Added Merli Baroudi, MIGA's Director of Economics and Sustainability, "Indeed, the Iraq Country Partnership Framework offers a strong opportunity to promote green, resilient and inclusive development in Iraq, leveraging the World Bank Group Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025 and placing the country on a more sustainable pathway to a lower carbon future." Having maintained its engagement and an uninterrupted field presence in Iraq since 2003, the World Bank Group has built a strong active portfolio in the country. This has resulted in important initiatives, notably in multi-sector emergency reconstruction programs in areas liberated from ISIS occupation, reforms of the public financial management (PFM) and social protection system among others, and private sector investments of more than US\$1 billion.

"As Iraq rebuilds its economy, the private sector will have a critical role to play in creating jobs and more opportunities for young people. This CPF provides the framework for the World Bank Group to focus on advisory and investment engagements with the business community in priority sectors, as well as to support improving the enabling and business environment to pave the way for Iraq's private sector to lead the country's future and generate shared prosperity," said Abdullah Jefri, IFC's Manager for the Levant. Furthermore, the sustained WBG engagement in Iraq has resulted in an accumulation of a wealth of experience on the country's economic and political context. Key lessons include the importance of national ownership, building the capacity of public institutions for sustainable development, working in partnership with international partners to drive governmental reforms, adopting flexible and adaptable approaches in mobilizing resources, improving the business environment and ensuring access to finance for and the thriving of small and medium-sized enterprises, and adopting innovative approaches to progress in the implementation of the portfolio in the field under challenging political and security situations. The framework of the CPF will be implemented in two phases to allow the flexibility to adapt to changes over the five-year period. A first phase will cover roughly the period until a new Iraqi government is in place, with a focus on protecting the poor and vulnerable and on supporting initial government reforms. During a second phase, the Bank Group will support medium-term reforms to help shape a more diversified economy by creating a more enabling environment for the private sector and by developing human capital. Acknowledgment of the World Bank Group's role in supporting Iraq's development has been prominent over the years, especially in supporting the implementation of the GoI's reform plan, rebuilding damaged vital infrastructure from conflict and violence, improve basic service delivery, and mitigating the risks of COVID-19 pandemic by launching a 100 million immunization project. The CPF program will build on this trust to support Iraq's efforts in addressing its challenges towards a more stable and prosperous future for all Iraqis.

Innovation first: new initiative by UNDP digitalizes Iraq's public sector



Baghdad, 15 August 2021 - Under the Digital Transformation and E-governance project - in Iraq-, Iraq's Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSEC) with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and the Regional Hub in partnership with the implementing partner Estonia for e-Governance Academy, is launching a digital landscape assessment (DLA) to assess Iraq's digital maturity and foster a digital-first approach across key government institutions to better harness technology and innovation to deliver more and better results in the countries and communities in which we work.

Guided by the UNDP digital strategy's objectives - a call to action and innovation for UNDP and partners to better harness technology and innovation to deliver better results based on 2 concepts Digitization & Digitalization - the digital landscape assessment (DLA) will support Iraq assessing its digital landscape within the framework of the SDGs and

identify digital entry points for acceleration towards the SDGs realization. It shall evaluate the current situation by reviewing existing digital strategies, action plans and regulatory frameworks. Throughout exploring the key enablers of digital government such as the political will, the role and coordination of the leading agency, the legal and financing framework, digital databases, access to services, and cyber security, the assessment will provide key short- and long-term recommendations in each area to strengthen and advance Iraq's digital transformation in line with the SDGs targets, while tackling the digital divide and divers bottlenecks. The primary objective is to find new opportunities by harnessing the power of digital, to attain higher levels of prosperity and citizen satisfaction by providing public efficient, effective and transparent public services through the use of digital technologies

Building on the assessment upon its completion, a Public Sector Digital Transformation Roadmap is planned to

be developed to establish the baseline for Iraq's digital governance, identify the strategic priorities for digital transformation in the public sector and outline the main building blocks of a digital society while tackling challenges and bottlenecks— e.g. secure data exchange, digital identity and digital signature for citizens and businesses, data security and capacity development— along with proposals for the institutional, financial and legal framework of e-Governance.

“On behalf of the Iraqi e-government national committee, it is my great pleasure to announce launching of the cooperation with UNDP Iraq. I believe that this cooperation will help the e-government national committee, Iraqi ministries, and different sectors to facilitate the achievement of our national e-government project.” says Dr. Abbas Al-Bakry, Head of Training, Development and International Support Team of the Supreme Committee for E-Government in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

For the people of Iraq, the advancement in digital transformation will lead to more citizen engagement and will offer reliable, optimized and seamless access to public services and consequently decrease the need for visiting public offices in person, It will also unleash e-participation through direct engagement between the government, citizens and business

Finally, increased efficiency and engagement, digitalization of the public sector will also result in greater government transparency and accountability. When automated and standardized processes are introduced, corrupt behavior will be limited.

Najaf CoC held a symposium about fire and accident prevention

Najaf, 16 August 2021 - In collaboration with IOM Iraq, the Civil Defense Directorate and the National Centre for Vocational Safety in Najaf, the Najaf Chamber of Commerce held an awareness-raising symposium about fire and accident prevention in commercial stores.

The symposium included practical explanations for the civil defense staff covering proper construction specifications and use of alarm systems and fire-fighting devices.

Supported by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.



IOM Iraq rehabilitated 19 damaged shops in the in Al-Riaaia market in Baiji



Baiji, 16 August 2021 - IOM Iraq rehabilitated 19 damaged shops in the in Al-Riaaia market in Baiji, Salah al-Din Governorate to support the local

economy and commercial action and to create jobs by reopening the closed shops.

Rehabilitation work included removing debris and re-casting new roofs and floors; plastering and painting internal and external walls; and installing new doors and windows, as well as a modern lighting system for the entire market. Approximately 60,000 people will benefit from this project.

Supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and German Cooperation Bank (KfW)

IOM Iraq rehabilitated a public water well in Al-Huthail village in Ninewa Governorate

Baghdad, 17 August 2021 - IOM Iraq rehabilitated a public water well in Al-Huthail village in Ninewa Governorate. The project aims to increase and improve the village's water supply and reduce the water's salinity and turbidity values to the standard level in order to provide sufficient potable water for the community. Around 12,000 individuals will benefit from this project.

Supported by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and German Cooperation Bank (KfW)



National guidelines on human resources profiles and capacity building developed

Baghdad, 19 August 2021 - IOM chairs the Capacity Building and Human Resources Management Committee under the National Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Technical Working Group. As part of a collective effort and in consultation with the MHPSS TWG and relevant government entities, the

committee developed the National Guidelines on Human Resources Profiles and Capacity Building.

These guidelines aim to create a minimum standards framework for the human resources recruited for MHPSS projects in the country and ensure that the humanitarian and development projects in MHPSS guarantee the

ability of field teams to provide the best level of care to beneficiaries.

Read the guidelines at

<https://iraq.iom.int/publications/national-guidelines-mhpss-human-resources-profiles-and-capacity-building?fbclid=IwAR0ayqmTdj74IwmX1mMcSYMh01i6-JwhQxmSPwp-RXVd3MKo5l-NgiEwbvs>

Capacity building in Mass Evacuations and Natural Disaster preparedness

Erbil, 19 August 2021 - IOM organized a four-day workshop in Erbil for KRG government officials to build capacity in Mass Evacuations and Natural Disaster preparedness. The training included sessions on risk assessment and mapping, addressing protection issues, developing an evacuation plan, and more.

This training was supported by USAID.



Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food systems in Southern Iraq



Basra, 21 August 2021 - The project 'Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food systems in Southern Iraq' (GCP/IRQ/004/EC) funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, aims to empower poor smallholder farmers, improve agricultural productivity to strengthen farmers' income and create job opportunities.

As part of the project, FAO organized, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture in Basra, a workshop to present the findings of the Rapid Needs Assessment on the main value chains development and to agree on interventions in the targeted areas of Basra - Missan - Thi Qar.

The Rapid Needs Assessment targeted 15,739 households distributed over 530

villages from 18 districts. The main objectives were to identify potential livestock and crops value chains with economic opportunity for income generation and employment, design project intervention priorities and decide on transparent criteria for the selection of beneficiaries to be targeted.

The main challenges for livestock producers identified during the assessment in the south are:

- Very poor milk quality and hygiene standards i.e., due to the absence of cold/cooling milk chain centers, which in turn causes a difficulty to market the milk for remote rural areas, causing a high rate of post-harvest milk and dairy losses mainly during the summer.

- Home processing practiced under unhygienic conditions - i.e., throughout the project areas, home processing of traditional milk products (for family consumption and for sale) is practiced under unhygienic conditions using unsanitary equipment and often with no milk pasteurization.

- Poor feeding system and malnutrition i.e., due to absence of practicing fodder crops, poor quality of grazing and fodders, shortage, and high prices of feedstuffs.

- Poor technical knowledge and skills of farmers and extension workers. The main challenges faced for crop value chains, mainly date palm and tomato producers are:

- Low crop productivity, especially tomatoes and date palms

- Lack of infrastructure, poor

post-harvest management practices and weak marketing mechanisms e.g., cold stores, marketing services and poor post-harvest management practices.

- Water availability and quality, incl. irrigation challenges with water availability and quality, traditional irrigation practises, and poor on farm water use management knowledge.

- Poor technical practices in the production of vegetable crop seedlings and date palm shoots using greenhouses and tissue culture technology.

- The need for capacity development and raising awareness of good agriculture practices among farmers.

The results of the study identified the problems and challenges facing farmers, considering the existing conditions in the country and the region. This provided a basis to review the activities and interventions.

This included discussions on the selection conditions for direct beneficiaries, identifying and approval, which will achieve effective value chains for farmers and contribute to strengthening rural resilience and improving livelihood conditions.

The workshop moderated by Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq and presented by FAO international experts, Dr. Nakd Khamis and Dr. Chedly Kayouli, contributed to the development of a road map to achieve effective value chains for farmers and contribute to strengthening rural resilience and improving livelihood conditions in the targeted governorates.

FAO following up the progress in rehabilitation of Aljazeera water project

Baghdad, 25 August 2021 - The Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Dr. Salah El-Hajj Hassan, and FAO team, conducted a field mission on Wednesday, 25 August 2021, to the Northern Aljazeera irrigation project (MADAD), implemented by FAO in coordination with the Ministry of Water Resources and funded by the European Union.

During the visit, FAO met the Director of Rabiaa district in Nineveh Governorate, who praised the efforts of the organization in supporting the agricultural sector and rehabilitating the irrigation project, which will restore life to the entire region.

FAO rehabilitated several parts of Al-Jazeera Irrigation System, including the construction of seven bridges and civil work repairs to the pumping station.

Additionally, canals cleaning and removing of debris (84.6 Km), through Cash for Work (CFW), provided income to the most affected and vulnerable community members in the target areas. These canals constitute phases I and II of Aljazeera irrigation system and cover 47 villages in Rabea sub-district of Ninewa.

The entire works will be completed and ready to operate in November this year; spare parts will maintain the currently suspended linear irrigation systems.

During the visit, Dr. Salah said "water is currently running into phase I of the irrigation system which has enabled farmers to plant their land and produce a variety of crops including wheat, barley, tomato, potato among others". He stressed that FAO will continue supporting farmers to increase agricultural production and improve

farmers' income in order to reduce poverty and provide a better life. It is expected that the direct and indirect beneficiaries of this project will reach 40 000.

Many of the local staff of both Ministries of Water Resources and Agriculture participated in the mission with a number of FAO experts.



Groundbreaking ceremony of physical infrastructure of “Beautiful Missan”

Missan, 25 August 2021 - Funded by the European Union (EU), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ‘Beautiful Missan’ will improve local service provision, working together with communities and local authorities. Today a ceremony that marks the beginning of a new construction site took place under the auspices of the Governor of Missan. The project advances urban revival, also using renewable energy sources.

This project is implemented in partnership between the Governorate of Missan, UNDP, and Oxfam in Iraq under the framework of the Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq Through Local Development programme, funded by the EU. The choice of the location came after a series of consultations among the stakeholders, the community, and local institutions in addition to a thorough assessment that identified pressing priorities for Missan Governorate.

The governor of Missan Mr. Ali Dawi said: “This project was suggested based on the strategies of the governorate of Missan and its annual plans and is to be executed by UNDP and Oxfam to improve and rehabilitate areas with importance in the service, tourism and entertainment sectors in Amarah. This will be the first step in Beautiful Missan which will expand to other areas in the governorate. This project comes as a reassurance to the importance and validity of the partnership between the governorate of Missan and the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq, and



in coordination with local organizations, residents and the community.”

The Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq Zena Ali Ahmad added: “Today marks the beginning of key rehabilitation work in support to Missan’s Governorate local plans, starting with the road near the Sabeen temple. As part of the process of the beautification of Missan, this will enhance the touristic environment, support local communities through job creation in facilities supported by the project, with focus on youth and women. We would like to thank the EU for its partnership to advance local development in Missan governorate.”

The Head of Cooperation of the European Union Delegation to Iraq, Ms. Barbara Egger mentioned: “Today’s ceremony is an important milestone in the European Union support to the governorate of Missan. Local ownership of this work is crucial, we are appreciative of the close cooperation and look forward to a swift completion,

towards the benefit of the people of Missan.”

Oxfam in Iraq’s Advocacy Manager, Matthew Hemsley said: “We are privileged to have the support and trust of the people of Missan in this endeavour, as well as the involvement of many residents who will be able to take advantage of the employment opportunities it generates. We also want to work to ensure that women and young people can fully benefit from this space. It’s an honour to collaborate with the Missan governor’s office and UNDP on this project and we look forward to sharing in the benefits with the communities of Missan in the future.”

The reconstruction of the road is estimated to directly benefit the area’s residents and visitors in addition to more than four hundred youth and women through trainings on business management and Small Medium Enterprises. This includes skilled and unskilled workers working on this construction, and Small Medium Enterprises (SME) grants recipients.

Labor Issues

Conference held by ILO and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs highlights key labour market issues in Iraq

Baghdad, 4 July 2021 (ILO News) - Partners from across the spectrum have come together to discuss some of the key issues shaping Iraq’s labour market, with discussions focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work and finding solutions to address the country’s decent work needs.

Held Under the Patronage of His Excellency Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, a conference entitled Iraq’s Labour Market: Realities and Aspiration, was organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the

International Labour Organization.

It was attended by His Excellency Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Dr. Adel Al-Rikabi, UN Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Martin Huth and ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Dr. Maha Kattaa.

The conference also brought together experts and representatives from the

government, employers’ and workers’ organizations of Iraq, key policymakers, UN agencies and development partners, as well as academics.

“One of the most important factors which contributes to peace is employment and the provision of decent work opportunities for Iraqis. The on-going unemployment situation is a serious challenge, which leads to an increase in violence and instability, hinders the creation of an environment that attracts investment, and increases social problems,” said Dr. Al-Rikabi. “We hope

Conference held by ILO and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs highlights key labour market issues in Iraq *(continued)*



that, through you and through the efforts of the concerned parties, to work to restore the labour market of Iraq to its position, both nationally and internationally, and work to restore balance in the forces of the labour market and its various components, and stimulate investment to create more decent job opportunities."

The conference centred around four key sessions: labour market challenges and opportunities; the role of the private sector and investment in creating decent employment; active labour market policies and programmes; and the development of an integrated and comprehensive national employment policy.

"The UN in Iraq is actively contributing to both creation of decent jobs through its large-scale projects and to employment through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The Government of Iraq and its private sector are the key stakeholders for the long-term vision of this joint Cooperation Framework, which transforms humanitarian needs into long-term development goals. I am confident that today's workshop will bring us one step closer to achieving these goals," said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano.

The one-day event was an opportunity to discuss, exchange views and lessons learnt on key labour market issues

guided by evidence-based research and programmes. It examined solutions to address the immediate needs of the country's labour force, and ways to coordinate efforts that could better support the country's most vulnerable workers. It also looked at medium and longer-term measures needed to better protect workers, such as those in informal employment and enterprises, such as small-scale businesses, so they can better cope especially during economic shocks, such as that brought about by the pandemic.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, Mr. Huth, stressed that "increasing employment and ensuring decent work for all are essential aspects of sustainable development. As European Union, we sustain that quality employment and decent work conditions help reduce inequalities and poverty among all Iraqis, and empower Iraqi people, especially women, young people and the most vulnerable such as displaced persons and people with disabilities."

"The Covid-19 pandemic compounded by the economic crisis, has had a significant impact on the socio-economic well-being of all Iraqis, thereby highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to the labour market in Iraq. As European Union, we are thus pleased to support together with our UN-partners the

laudable efforts of the Iraqi Government for active labour market policies, labour governance and labour protection as laid out in the White Paper and specifically, the Decent Work Country Programme. Today's first Iraqi Labour Conference has reassured me of the strong resolve of the Iraqi Government to take decisive action and I am looking forward to continuing our EU engagement with the Iraqi authorities," Mr. Huth added.

The conference comes under the framework of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in Iraq, which is being implemented by the ILO in partnership with the Government and social partners for the period 2019-2023. The programme focuses on three key priorities: supporting private sector development and job creation; strengthening social protection and addressing child labour; and strengthening labour governance and social dialogue.

"We need to agree on the most pressing issues facing the labour market in Iraq today and on ways to address them in a more effective and coordinated manner through our policies and programmes. From job creation to supporting workers through skills development, and promoting entrepreneurship through the establishment of small businesses, to facilitating access to public employment services and developing the private sector so it can create more and better jobs," said Dr. Kattaa. "These programmes should be guided by a national employment strategy and a clear action plan implemented in close coordination with the government and our social partners."

The conference concluded with an outline of key recommendations which were put forward through the various research and discussions which took place during the day. The recommendations will be presented and endorsed as a first step towards concrete action to enhance decent work in Iraq's labour market.

Security Sector Reform

UNODC facilitates judicial exchange on the requirements for the protection of victims of human trafficking

Cairo, Egypt, 21 June 2021 - Protecting victims of human trafficking during the investigation and trial phases is the cornerstone of an effective criminal justice response. Too often, victims of human trafficking are not identified in the first place, and when they are identified, their rights are not respected

during their interviews and testimony, as well as post-trial. Victims should be informed of their rights, should not face punishment including criminalization, detention, deportation, or other sanctions on account of crimes they were compelled to commit or were directly related to their exploitation.

The Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East), jointly with UNODC's Regional Office in Cairo, from 14 to 16 June 2021 brought 9 judges from across Iraq to Cairo, Egypt, for a 3-day exchange with Egyptian judges and officials on the legal and

UNODC facilitates judicial exchange on the requirements for the protection of victims of human trafficking (continued)



judicial requirements for the protection of victims of trafficking in persons (TIP). The Iraqi judges included men and women trial and appeal court judges from across the country, including 2 judges from the Kurdistan region.

Cristina Albertin, UNODC's Regional Representative, opened the workshop and stressed how "bringing together criminal justice actors within the MENA region is one of our key priorities in our UNODC Regional Programme for the Arab States and also in our recently launched UNODC Strategy 2021-2025". Representing the European Union which funds GLO.ACT, Graziella Rizzi encouraged the practical exchange of ideas and best practices among peers. She also commended GLO.ACT for its 'inspiring and innovative' work in ensuring gender equality remains a top priority, through the Gender and Human Rights Toolkit and the GLO.ACT Women's Network.

The head of the Iraqi delegation, Judge Raid Hamid, from Mosul, highlighted the nexus between conflict and TIP especially relating to Da'esh in his region, and stressed the need to ensure victims' access to justice.

GLO.ACT Coordinator Aimée Comrie outlined the critical role of the judiciary, since 'judges breathe life and context into the international framework through national practice'.

The Iraqi delegation also heard from the Egyptian Chairperson and Head of the National Coordinating Committee on Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons. Ambassador Naela Gabr warmly welcomed the spirit of peer exchange and invited UNODC to consider supporting a regional meeting of national TIP committees.

Addressing the judges, GLO.ACT Policy Lead Samantha Munodawafa reiterated that 'when a crime is committed by a victim of trafficking, international best practice is to uphold the principle of non-punishment of victims as punishment

hinders the victim's ability to recover and seek justice'. UNODC's Expert, Judge Ihab Minabbawy, stressed that judges must ensure that victims are not subjected to secondary victimization through the criminal justice process.

Judge Mihraban Ahmad Hassan from Sulemaniya, suggested that 'judges must create a trustful environment for the victims; the objective of the judge is to reach the truth.'

GLO.ACT Regional Adviser, Martin Reeve, based in Baghdad, recalled that children are protected in international law. 'Bringing a child before the court doesn't accomplish anything. We should look for the responsible adult, man or woman, who is organizing this.' Iraq's current law on TIP requires the establishment of means of exploitation for children which is an area of suggested legal reform. Dr. Ibtisam stressed the importance of the identification of victims, especially children, at the earliest moment.

Days 1 and 2 of the workshop were given over to round-table discussion on international and national legal frameworks, means of control used by traffickers, and an examination of the victim's experience of trafficking. On day 3 Iraqi judges drafted a guidance note for investigating and trial judges for their consideration when dealing with potential trafficking cases. The guidance

note was drafted based only on content agreed by the Iraqi judges present at the workshop to ensure full compatibility with Iraqi laws and traditions. As a next step, the guidance note will be presented to the Iraqi Judicial Council for review and endorsement.

The delegation was accompanied by the Iraqi Director General of Women's Affairs at the Council of Ministers, Dr. Ibtisam Aziz, who is also the Deputy Chair of the Advisory Board of the GLO.ACT Women's Network.

This project is funded by the European Union

The Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants – Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East) is a four-year (2018-2022), €12 million joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in up to five countries: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Afghanistan), Islamic Republic of Iraq (I.R. of Iraq), Republic of Pakistan (Pakistan). GLO.ACT-Bangladesh is a parallel initiative also financed by the EU and implemented with IOM.

The project builds on a global community of practice set in motion in GLO.ACT 2015-2019 and assists governmental authorities and civil society organizations in targeted, innovative, and demand-driven interventions: sustaining effective strategy and policy development, legislative review and harmonization, capability development, and regional and trans-regional cooperation. The project also provides direct assistance to victims of human trafficking and vulnerable migrants through the strengthening of identification, referral, and protection mechanisms. The project is fully committed to mainstreaming Human Rights and Gender Equality considerations across all of its activities.



New program to help counteract serious financial crimes in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 July 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, in partnership with the United States Government and the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq has launched a multi-year training initiative today, to strengthen and improve complex organized and financial crime investigations in Iraq. The training program, called Organized and Financial Crime Investigations: An Integrated Approach, focuses on the skills, expertise, techniques, and procedures necessary for Iraqi judges and other professionals to effectively investigate complex financial crime cases. It also makes recommendations to improve policies and procedures for the investigation and prosecution of complex organised and financial crimes and establishes a roadmap for implementing those policies.

As part of the initiative, UNDP will

work with judges, prosecutors and financial crime investigators to conduct workshops for various Iraqi government institutions on organized and financial crimes, and to oversee the development of a handbook on leading and conducting complex financial crime investigations.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq, the Honorable Judge Faiq Zaidan, emphasised that the goal of the program is “to strengthen the procedures and tactics of investigative judges on approaching and leading complex financial crime investigations, in close collaboration with the colleagues from the investigative agencies” of the Commission of Integrity, the Board of Supreme Audit, the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Office of the Central Bank, and the specialised investigation directorates of

the Ministry of the Interior.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Matthew Tueller stated that Iraq requires “efficient tools and policies to help investigate and prosecute financial crimes, because the motivation behind the majority of these criminal offenses is personal enrichment that hurts the Iraqi state and people.” The United States Department of State was pleased to finance UNDP’s assessment on financial crime investigation capabilities in Iraq; this assessment helped lay the groundwork for the training and was instrumental in drafting guidelines financial investigation techniques for judges and investigators.

Ms Zena Ali-Ahmad, UNDP Resident Representative stated “This program and accompanying paper acknowledges how complex, organised financial crimes such as corruption, money laundering, and illicit accumulation of wealth are contributing to an atmosphere of privilege and injustice. These crimes are a major impediment to Iraq’s economic recovery, stability, and development. UNDP stands ready to work alongside the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq and other institutions to help put an end to these crimes and is extremely grateful to the U.S. Department of State for funding this important initiative.”

Funds from this project have been generously provided by the United States Government. The project is part of UNDP Iraq’s Security Sector Reform/Rule of Law Programme.



Iraq: Facing drug trafficking with geo-strategy and strategic analysis training

Cairo, Egypt, 6 July 2021 - According to the UNODC World Drug Report, 35.6 million people suffer from drug use disorders globally. Effective, balanced solutions to drug demand and supply must be rooted in evidence and shared responsibility. This is more important than ever, as illicit drug challenges become increasingly complex, and the COVID-19 crisis and economic downturn threaten to worsen their impacts, on the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable most of all. The report notes that illicit drug trafficking in and through Iraq specifically has been increasing since 2003.

Consequently, UNODC, in cooperation and coordination with the Attaché de Police at the French Embassy in Iraq, is supporting the Iraqi Anti-Narcotics Directorate at the Ministry of Interior

(MoI) in its response to counter cross-border illicit drug trafficking, through the project “Strengthening the capacities of Iraqi law enforcement and criminal investigation services.” This project is funded by the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (US INL).

Sparking the efforts under the project, the first training on “Drug Trafficking Geo-Strategy and Strategic Analysis” took place in Cairo, Egypt for Heads of 10 Iraqi Anti-Narcotics Units in Baghdad and Erbil. The five-day in-depth activity focused on the strategic analysis and operational methodology for the identification of the main actors, modus operandi, and drug smuggling routes of international organized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking. The topic was the

foundation for the development of an appropriate national database.

The training was delivered by experts from the Anti-Narcotics Bureau ‘Office Anti-Stupéfiants’ (OFAST) of the French Ministry of Interior, experts from US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) based in Cyprus, the Attaché de Police based at the French Embassy in Iraq, and UNODC Experts. The international and varied expertise allowed for effectively clarifying the transnational dimension of countering drug trafficking, the necessity and tools for strategic international police and judicial cooperation at all levels (multilateral, bilateral, and national), and all types (institutional, technical, and operational).

The Iraqi delegation successfully

Iraq: Facing drug trafficking with geo-strategy... (continued)

acquired knowledge on the intersections between drug source countries and regions, trafficking methods, and money laundering. Moreover, the delegation was introduced to the different types of drug seizures, the concealing techniques, the drug trafficking routes, and the drug prices.

Overall, three main angles to facing drug trafficking were presented to the delegation

- 1) Understanding the criminal market and its evolution;
- 2) identifying all influential elements in working against drug trafficking, while targeting trafficking points and locations of traffickers;
- 3) as well as establishing a threat status to define national response strategies for the interception of criminal groups' activities and seize their illicit assets.

The multiple interactions throughout the training between the Iraqi delegation and the different experts from France, USA, and UNODC

confirmed that this event became a multilateral cooperation platform where attendees and experts exchanged high-level technical/operational expertise and experience as well as built trust for future cooperation.

Upon completion of the training, the Iraqi delegation declared that "It was a very interesting training and would like to share OFAST's experience with

H.E the Minister of Interior and probably make it a case study for all the incoming and reform-minded officers in the Anti Narcotic Directorate. Also, addressing drug trafficking in Iraq is becoming a new priority, we need to develop our existing capacities at the strategic and operational level by applying what we learned during this workshop."



STRIVE Juvenile: preventing and responding to violence against children and juvenile by terrorist and violent extremist groups

Baghdad, 12 July 2021 – The Government of Iraq, together with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), launched the STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq with the aim to develop and implement comprehensive national responses to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism affecting children and juveniles.

In the past years, the international community has been increasingly confronted with the phenomenon of the association of children and juveniles with terrorist and violent extremist groups. Iraq is indubitably one of the countries most affected by terrorism and so-called violent extremism in recent years. The Islamic State (ISIL) recruited thousands of children and juveniles in Iraq, using them as front-line fighters, as suicide bombers, to manufacture and plant explosive devices, conduct patrols, as guards and spies, and for a variety of support roles. Hundreds of foreign children and juveniles were also associated with ISIL, either traveling to Iraq alone or brought by family members.

Since 2019, the Government of Iraq has been implementing stabilization, reconciliation, and accountability programs to strengthen locals' ability to counter terrorist radicalization and



recruitment. Nevertheless, many ISIL-alleged affiliated/associated children and juveniles remained in Iraqi custody along with Iraqi ISIL fighters. Therefore, the Government of Iraq has expressed the urgent need to tackle the situation of children and young people who are currently in detention for alleged affiliation/association with terrorist groups and has acknowledged that the promotion of their rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as the provision of fair and equal justice, are important to prevent future terrorist radicalization and violence.

Through the new STRIVE Juvenile project funded by the EU, the Government of Iraq, represented today by the Honorable Mr. Ziad Al-Tamimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and Judge Laith Jabber Hamza

on behalf of the High Judicial Council, will closely work with UNODC, the executing agency, to strengthen national capacities to combat terrorist and violent extremism recruitment and exploitation of children and juveniles, while also increasing the resilience of vulnerable children and juveniles against terrorist groups agendas.

Within the framework of UNODC's strong mandate and expertise in violence against children, justice for children and counter-terrorism, the Office has been addressing since 2015 specific objectives to increase the protection of children from terrorism and violent extremism and to ensure that children and juveniles are better served and protected by justice systems.

Building on national ownership, the

Launch in Iraq of the new STRIVE action... *(continued)*

STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq will support the country in developing coherent strategies that better serve and protect children and juveniles by enhancing safe and resilient communities and seeking alternatives to prosecution, by prioritizing rehabilitative measures with the aim of reintegrating children and juveniles into society. The European Union acknowledging that children and juveniles can be extremely vulnerable to terrorist tactics, emphasized today the EU's commitment to fighting children recruitment and exploitation

by terrorist and extremist groups which requires coherent and comprehensive measures. The EU Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Mr. Martin Huth, stated: "The joint EU-UNODC initiative, STRIVE Juvenile, supports efforts in Iraq to protect children from threats associated with terrorism and violent extremism." Today's launch of the STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq, is a sign of the strong partnership between the European Union, UNODC and the Government of Iraq, demonstrating their joint efforts to disrupt terrorist groups' recruitment of children and juveniles and promote

the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been associated with these groups, in full respect of human rights, gender equality and international law. Mr. Ali El-Bereir, Head of UNODC Office in Iraq, pledged "STRIVE Juvenile supports the Iraqi Government in its efforts to prevent child recruitment by terrorist groups, and to promote rehabilitation, reintegration and justice responses adapted to children and juveniles, bridging the gap between security interests and child rights."

UNODC representatives meet with Minister of Interior

Baghdad, 14 July 2021 - In Iraq, Ali Elbereir, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Head of Office for Iraq, and Martin Reeve, UNODC Regional Advisor, met with his Excellency Othman Al-Ghanimi, Minister of Interior to discuss Iraq's criminal justice priorities.



Mine Action

UNMAS hosted Kuwaiti Ambassador for a field visit to a clearance operations site in Fallujah, Anbar governorate

Fallujah, 30 June 2021 - UNMAS recently hosted the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Salem Al-Zamanan, for a field visit to a clearance operations site in Fallujah, Anbar governorate, Iraq. The two entities later met with Anbar governor, Dr. Ali Farhan Al-Dulaimi, and senior governorate representatives to discuss the current situation in Anbar, as well as additional needed explosive ordnance clearance support.

Although the governorate, alongside national and international humanitarian organizations, are deeply engrossed in rebuilding damaged infrastructure after the Da'esh occupation, they are often curtailed by the lingering presence of the armed

group – thousands of explosive ordnance still threaten the lives of innocent civilians.

In view of the extensive contamination in Anbar, UNMAS continues its support for clearance and explosive ordnance risk education in the

governorate, as well as the technical support to local police to ensure that explosive threats are dealt with safely.

UNMAS would like to thank the Government of Kuwait for its continuous support to vulnerable and displaced Iraqis, children in particular.



UNMAS in Iraq facilitated EORE training sessions

Baghdad, 05 August 2021 - UNMAS in Iraq recently facilitated explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) training sessions for community focal points in Sinjar and Tel Afar, Ninewa governorate.

To develop and sustain the national capacity to conduct EORE activities, the sessions provide community focal points with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver EORE messages to their communities and to

report the explosive ordnance through appropriate channels.

Thanks to the generous support of the Embassy of Italy in Baghdad.

GICHD team continues its mission in Iraq

Mosul, 6 July 2021 - Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) team continued their mission in Iraq by visiting the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) Regional Mine Action Centre – North in the city of Mosul. The GICHD also visited operational sites by GCS/UNMAS and Tetra tech and witnessed firsthand Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) clearance and residential area clearance activities.

In Erbil, the delegation visited the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency HQ to discuss the next step of the strategic planning process in addition to visiting the Erbil Mine Action Centre

and an IKMAA AP mines clearance site in Soran in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The GICHD is looking forward to continue working closely with the DMA

and IKMAA to finalise the Iraq National Mine Action Strategy. This support was funded by the Netherlands and Canada.



UNMAS organized a field visit for the delegation of the Netherlands Embassy to a Halo Trust explosive ordnance clearance site

Fallujah, 7 July 2021 - UNMAS recently organized a field visit for the Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Iraq, Mr. Rochus Pronk, and the Senior Stabilization Officer, Ms. Mirte Bosch to a Halo Trust explosive ordnance clearance site in Fallujah, Anbar governorate, Iraq.

The delegates also visited the Fallujah Iron Bridge, one of the many infrastructure clearance sites that UNMAS cleared successfully in the earlier days after the liberation of the city from Da'esh. The bridge is now providing safe and quick access to a maternity hospital and is also

facilitating passage for thousands of vehicles to cross the river bisecting the city in pursuit of their daily livelihoods. Despite the efforts expended by UNMAS Iraq, its partners, and national demining capacities, Iraq remains one of the most explosive ordnance-contaminated countries in the world. Iraq still requires the collaboration of efforts from the UN, NGOs, and national stakeholders to ensure that the country is cleared from all forms of explosive ordnance.

UNMAS would like to thank the Netherlands for its continuous support to vulnerable and displaced communities in Iraq.



UNMAS is bringing together international mine action organizations with local NGOs to improve the national ownership

Baghdad, 21 July 2021 - In Iraq, UNMAS is bringing together international mine action organizations with local NGOs to improve the national ownership and localization in the mine action sector.

Local organizations Al Ghad, SHO-Shareteah Humanitarian Org and the Health and Social Care Organization (IHSCO IRAQ) have been partnered with the international NGOs The HALO Trust, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), and Danchurchaid respectively.

As a result, the increase in national capacity has led to enhanced community trust and involvement among Iraqis when it comes to reporting suspicious items to UNMAS. UNMAS would like to thank the Government of the UK for their support to mine action activities in Iraq.



The European Union provides an additional USD eight million for UNMAS activities in Iraq



Baghdad, 30 July 2021 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 7,000,000 (approximately USD 8,059,000) from the European Union (EU), which will support the Government of Iraq in protecting vulnerable civilians from the threat posed by explosive ordnance left behind by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Implementation of the project has already commenced, and is scheduled to last until mid-2022. As part of the project initiation, UNMAS recently hosted a project launch meeting and the first steering committee meeting chaired by the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) and the EU. The annual work plan was discussed, along with challenges, opportunities and the sustainability of the project activities.

Legacy mines and explosive remnants

of war are currently threatening the lives of communities in southern Iraq and the EU is the first donor providing UNMAS with a financial contribution in support of clearance of explosive ordnance in the area. The project will pave the way for much-needed development through increased agricultural activities and housing development. The clearance will also enable tourism activities and reinvigorate the economy of Basra.

The contribution will further support clearance and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) efforts in the retaken areas and thereby enabling the safe return of internally displaced persons as well as reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, the contribution will assist UNMAS in supporting a nationally led and implemented response. Building on existing capacities, UNMAS provides training

and technical advice to the Government of Iraq and its various ministries, mine action authorities and other stakeholders to support the effective management, regulation and coordination of the explosive ordnance response.

EU Head of Delegation, Ambassador Martin Huth, said, “The EU has been a steadfast supporter of Iraq’s demining efforts for many years. This additional support illustrates our continued commitment to address the problem of explosive ordnance in Iraq and to thereby enable economic development. At the same time, I would like to stress that demining efforts must ultimately be led by the Government of Iraq. I am therefore pleased that UNMAS will work closely with Government authorities in order to institutionalise a nationally-led approach to demining which is urgently needed in Iraq.”

Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, added: “As the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to reverberate across the country, the additional support from the EU will also provide much-needed economic relief to struggling communities by providing access to lands previously contaminated by explosive ordnance that can be utilized for farming, grazing of cattle and other livelihood activities.”

First time UNMAS conducted a legacy clearance project on a large scale

Basra, 22 August 2021 - UNMAS in Iraq recently organized a field visit to the ongoing mine clearance site in Shat al-Arab district of Basra together with the national mine action authority, the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA). Supported by the EU, this is the first time UNMAS conducted a legacy clearance project on a large scale. The field to be cleared was Iraq’s largest forest of palm trees and farms. This clearance project will support the revitalization of agriculture.

UNMAS’s implementing partner in Iraq, al-Khebra al-Fania, a national demining company will clear large swathes of fertile lands that were polluted during the Iraqi-Iranian war, and make the land accessible to its original inhabitants who were displaced by the explosive threats.

“We are very grateful for the EU’s generous contribution to the area,



which will provide numerous acres of farming land and allow people, who suffer from housing issues and lack of livelihoods, to once again populate this rich part of Iraq,” said UNMAS Iraq’s Chief of Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar. “This important work

highlights the EU’s commitment to helping Iraq on its path to eradicate the threat of explosive hazards and help vulnerable communities,” he added. UNMAS would like to thank the EU for its continuous support to vulnerable and displaced communities in Iraq.

Surviving COVID-19: Ajeeba's story

Baghdad, 1 July 2021 - When Ajeeba Ismael Hashim, 75, contracted COVID-19 this April, her symptoms were severe. She had a persistent cough, striking chest pain and a very high fever.

"I was concerned for my life. But what added to my stress during this period was the risk of exposure and spreading the virus to my family," Ajeeba recalls feeling alarmed. "My heart was racing."

Based in Qazaniya village in Diyala, Ajeeba has lived there all her life except for a few years during ISIL occupation when she moved to a neighboring village. She is a widow with 12 grown children with stable jobs. Knowing that she had pre-existing medical conditions, Ajeeba was scared.

Receiving timely care

Ajeeba's son Osama As'ad Refat, 55, took her to Baqubha General hospital to seek medical care. "There was no doubt that she needed immediate medical attention. We were all so worried for her," shares Osama. "As you know, this virus is not an easy fight."

Once there, she was immediately admitted into the COVID-19 isolation center by the doctors. "I was surrounded by such helpful nurses and doctors. Amid all the trauma, I was grateful to have such support around me. The facilities for my treatment were great, especially as I needed oxygen support."

Establishing dedicated isolation wards

In September 2020, UNDP worked with the Government of Iraq to establish 20 COVID-19 isolation rooms in Baqubah General hospital in Diyala. The wards



were equipped with defibrillators, extracorporeal life support and protective gear.

"Since the isolation wards were established, we have provided critical medical care to hundreds of patients," says Dr. Haider Jassim Muhammad, 52, Director of Baquba Teaching Hospital. He was the main doctor who attended to Ajeeba.

Doctors and nurses in the hospital have worked round the clock to save lives. "It has been the toughest period for health care workers. But we are happy when patients leave the COVID-19 wards healthy and recovered," Dr. Haider adds.

Road to recovery

Ajeeba's condition improved enough to be released in six days. She was sent home to fully recover and recuperate. "I was thrilled to see my house again. I still remember the day I walked into the house and was welcomed by my sons, daughters and little grandchildren. They stood far away to avoid contact, but I could still see their smiles. It filled my heart with hope." She recovered fully 10 days later.

The spread of the COVID-19 virus in Iraq has infected more than 1.33 million people*. Amongst the unfortunate tragedy lies stories of Iraqis, who have defied the odds – surviving long days of isolation, requiring critical medical needs and fighting the virus despite their age. Ensuring timely and quality care for COVID-19 patients and a purpose-built environment for frontline workers to treat them has played an essential role in their recovery.

"If anyone tests positive and experiences the symptoms, first isolate yourself and get medical attention immediately," says Ajeeba.

She wanted to share her story to thank all the frontline workers who saved her life and let people know that they should take the virus seriously.

About UNDP's COVID-19 response in Iraq

UNDP has been supporting the Government of Iraq since the early stages to minimize the spread of COVID-19, reduce the loss of life, minimise the negative impact upon the economy and actively build social cohesion. Measures under the response package include increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment, establishing isolation wards and undertaking assessments to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies. Currently, 19 COVID-19 isolation ward facilities are to be completed.

The COVID-19 isolation wards in Diyala were established with generous support from Belgium, Sweden and Denmark.

A sustainable recovery from COVID-19: final report lists key recommendations to move beyond the pandemic

Baghdad, 7 July 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq has today concluded its socio-economic impact assessment series by issuing a final report that aggregates its key findings and more than 50 recommendations made to the Government of Iraq and development partners to support Iraq's recovery from COVID-19.

Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19 in Iraq: Key findings is the final paper in a series of eight released by UNDP on the impact of COVID-19 in Iraq.

Throughout the series, UNDP provides a multidimensional analysis on the impact of the pandemic and related shocks, current and past, on Iraq and its citizens. It recognizes that returning to a sustainable and inclusive development trajectory depends on addressing the root causes of fragility and provides a range of policy recommendations for all

stakeholders in the recovery from the pandemic and economic crisis, anticipating that this would catalyse a holistic approach to realizing the SDGs.

"The pandemic hit Iraq following years of conflict, and on top of political turmoil and civil unrest paired with a significant drop in oil revenue. Since then, COVID-19 has both revealed and exacerbated deep economic and social vulnerabilities while hitting the poorest and most vulnerable groups – like youth, women and IDPs – the hardest," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"In Iraq, compounding shocks consistently affect all dimensions of fragility and gradually eat away at the foundations of the social contract. Through the series, we wanted to demonstrate the urgency of investing in inclusive recovery scenarios if we are to make progress towards Agenda 2030 for

everyone. A multidimensional approach addressing key economic, societal, political, security and environmental vulnerabilities is imperative for recovery. It will be impossible to attain the Sustainable Development Goals without tackling these first.

"We hope this policy series is a useful resource to rethink development solutions to build forward better to a fragile context such as Iraq and will inform research, policies, strategies and plans in support of the Iraqi people and their recovery from COVID-19," adds Ms. Ali Ahmad.

UNDP Iraq is grateful to ILO, IOM, UNEP and UN-Habitat for their partnership and important contributions to various reports under the Socio-economic Impact Assessment series. Click here to view a digital summary of the Socioeconomic Impact Assessment series.

COVID-19 situation critical in WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region



Cairo, Egypt, 13 July 2021 – After a decline in COVID-19 cases and deaths across WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region for 8 consecutive weeks, several countries are seeing a significant increase in new cases and deaths. Significant increases in COVID-19 cases have been reported from Libya, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, and Tunisia. Lebanon and Morocco have also started to see a rise in cases, with an exponential increase expected in these 2 countries in the coming weeks. “We are reaching a critical point for COVID-19 in our Region,” said Dr Ahmed

Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “Just one week after reaching the grim milestone of 11 million cases, we are now seeing an upward spike in a number of countries. This is being aggravated by new variants circulating – most concerningly the Delta variant – low vaccine availability and uptake, and lack of adherence to public health and social measures.” With the Eid al-Adha feast taking place during the week starting 20 July, traditionally marked by religious and social gatherings, WHO is concerned that the current upsurge may continue to peak in the coming weeks, with catastrophic consequences. “Countries are reintroducing or strengthening social and travel restrictions, but at this stage, increasing complacency by communities means that the virus is winning in the Region. “As variants continue to spread, we need everyone to get vaccinated as soon as they are offered the vaccine, and to continue wearing masks, and practising physical distancing. Although significant progress has been made, there remains a shocking

imbalance in the global distribution of vaccines, and this leaves millions of people exposed to deadly variants of concern. It is not too late to turn the course of this pandemic, but it requires much more exerted global, regional and national efforts,” said Dr Al-Mandhari. The total number of cases across the Region now exceeds 11.4 million, and the number of deaths is more than 223 000, with 19 out of 22 countries now reporting at least one new variant circulating. In Iraq, cases have been increasing since the end of May with the daily average doubling during the past 5 weeks, increasing from 4010 cases on week of 30 May to 8076 cases on week of 4 July. The number of deaths has also increased during the past 3 weeks. Less than one percent of the population received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Efforts by Iraq to contain the pandemic include banning government employees, students, and teachers from working unless they bring a vaccination document or a negative PCR test report on a weekly basis, and a countrywide partial curfew is being implemented.

First COVID-19 vaccination unit opens in Domiz-1 refugee camp in Duhok



Erbil, 14 July 2021 - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Directorate General of Health (DOH) inaugurated yesterday the first COVID-19 vaccination unit in Domiz-1 Refugee Camp in Duhok Governorate. The establishment of this vaccination unit was achieved with support from the Department of Health and the Department of Migration and Crisis Response (DMCR) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), complementing efforts undertaken by partners. The newly established unit is part of the public health centre at the Camp that is established and already providing vital health care services to camp residents,

which currently hosts some 31,000 Syrian refugees, and those living in urban areas nearby. The opening ceremony of the vaccination unit, the first of its kind in a refugee camp in Iraq, was attended by the General Director of Health in Duhok, UNHCR Duhok, in addition to other government officials and partners including Peace Winds of Japan, the Swedish Development Aid Organisation (SWEDO) and DMCR, as well as Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF). Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has coordinated with and supported the health sector throughout Iraq to ensure that refugees and IDPs are included in national

health response plans and vaccination rollouts. “This year’s theme of the World Refugee Day was inclusion of refugees and other communities affected by displacement in health, education, and sports. As the pandemic has shown us, nobody is safe until everyone is safe. As such, collective efforts, and partnerships in support to the health sector are critical to reach more beneficiaries among refugee, displaced, returnee, and host communities”, said Gwenolenn Le Couster, Head of UNHCR Sub-Office Duhok. UNHCR has been disseminating information and awareness on the vaccine to the refugee community, and the importance of vaccination. The camp hosts the largest refugee population and is also accessible for those in some urban areas. Refugees can register for the vaccine online through the Ministry of Health portal. On-site registration is also available for refugees who approach the centre and the vaccination centre is public and not limited to camp residents. UNHCR welcomes the efforts by the authorities in the KRI and the Federal Government of Iraq for including refugees and other displaced communities in the national vaccination plan on par with the local population and for providing them access to PCR testing and COVID-19 treatment.

Roadshow event provides communities first-hand, reliable information on COVID-19 vaccination and prevention

Missan, 17 July 2021 - Dozens of Missan citizens attended WHO Iraq, UNICEF Iraq, Iraqi MOH and Missan Department of Health (DoH) roadshow event aimed at providing communities first-hand, reliable information on COVID-19 vaccination and prevention. WHO Iraq experts answered questions from citizens, some of those who attended the show also received their first dose from the vaccination teams deployed by Missan DOH.

WHO Iraq, Ministry of Health, UNICEF and Missan DOH recognizes the vital role of media practitioners in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and encouraging vaccine uptake in communities, that's why a workshop was held in Missan to garner their support. Through positive messaging, the media can dispel rumors and myths that negatively affect the fight of this deadly pandemic.



UNESCO, journalists and public authorities join hands to tackle the 'disinfodemic'

Baghdad, 24 July 2021 - In the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, rumors and inaccurate facts about the virus circulated in Iraq. Among these, stories about alleged treatments of COVID-19 such as herbs and nicotine led to reports of a rise in purchases of these products. A doctor even started to use non-certified substances to treat patients in his clinic.

To strengthen capacities to debunk these rumors and prevent their dangerous consequences on citizens' health and in certain cases on social stability, UNESCO, in partnership with the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission (CMC), the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Coalition 38, the Media and Culture Office of the

Prime Minister, and the Media and Communications Committee in the Iraqi Parliament, as well as relevant experts in the field of safety of journalists, has trained 1,360 journalists in fact-checking, professional and health reporting and safety.

The training was part of the #CoronavirusFacts project funded by the European Union. Equipped with better skills and networks to detect and debunk disinformation, these journalists actively started to report on and call out inaccuracies circulating in the public discourse and produce fact-based stories about the pandemic to help citizens make evidence-based decisions about their health.



UNFPA supports fight against COVID-19 in the Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 7 August 2021 - As part of the continued support to the Kurdistan Region's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA, with funding from the Iraq Humanitarian Fund, handed over 16 trucks of personal protective equipment to the Ministry of Health.

This distribution is the largest from UNFPA to the government of Kurdistan to be distributed to health workers in primary healthcare centres. The batch included gowns, masks, face shields among others.



500,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines arrived in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 August 2021 - Through COVAX and the support of USA Government, over 500,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines arrived in Iraq. WHO Iraq is delighted to have worked with the COVAX partners to secure these additional vaccines for the Iraqi people. Vaccines are safe and reduce risks of serious illness when you get COVID-19.

Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq: "We are grateful for the generosity and the solidarity shown by the American People. Together we can make an end to this terrible pandemic".



COVID-19 vaccination progress at the Domiz refugee camp

Duhok, 21 August 2021 - The Head of UNHCR Duhok Sub Office, the Manager of Domiz-1 Camp, and staff from UNHCR and Barzani Charity Foundation took COVID-19 vaccines at the UNHCR-established Vaccination Unit in Domiz refugee camp. This is part of efforts by UNHCR and partners to reach out to refugees and IDPs through awareness activities and sensitization on general health, COVID-19 vaccination, and hygiene in camps and urban areas across Duhok governorate.

It is worth mentioning that the vaccination unit serves refugees in

Domiz camps, other nearby camps and host communities in the area.



Healthcare

UNFPA supports access to quality healthcare services for women with disabilities

Erbil, 2 July 2021 - Primary healthcare is a fundamental human right. To provide easy access to quality healthcare services for women with disabilities, UNFPA, with funding from Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Sida [The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency], supports eight disability-friendly clinics in Kurdistan and one in Ninewa Governorate.

Additionally, to support returnees to their places of origin, UNFPA with funding from Sida supports a mobile clinic targeting the vulnerable population of Tash and Humeira areas in Anbar.

The mobile clinic deploys a doctor, a nurse and a midwife to offer free reproductive health services and conduct comprehensive health awareness campaigns in the most rural areas.



Young female entrepreneur strives to transform the medical sector in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Dohuk, 12 August 2021 (ILO News) - Twenty-five-year-old Nasreen Hassan has been working for years on a business idea that will help hospitals and medical centres in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq improve and maintain their medical equipment.

Having witnessed years of conflict, Nasreen says that she wants to do her part in saving and improving the lives of women, men and children, especially in light of the current worldwide pandemic. "The number of weapons and rockets outnumber medical equipment," said Nasreen. "And I want to correct this." "For me, I want to produce, install and provide maintenance for medical machinery locally. This will help create jobs for young people and open new opportunities for many." "But most importantly, it will save and improve lives."

Unable to pursue a degree in medical engineering, the IT graduate recently joined the ILO's Start Your Business (SYB) training programme in Iraq, aimed at giving her the knowledge and tools needed to set up her business.

Start Your Business is part of the wider Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training package designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development. The training in Iraq aims to support young refugees, internally displaced people, and vulnerable host community members who are interested in setting up their own small businesses or improving existing ones.

Nasreen and 140 other potential entrepreneurs joined a six-day intensive training in Dohuk in July 2021, that centred on nine courses designed to enhance their readiness to start a business, prepare their business plan and evaluate its viability.

The training is part of efforts being implemented by the ILO under the "Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities," also known as PROSPECTS, a multi-agency programme supported by the Government of the Netherlands.

For the ILO one of the key areas of focus of PROSPECTS in Iraq is to support



youth to transition from learning and skills development to decent work, through a range of wage employment and self-employment interventions, in collaboration with other PROSPECTS partners, including UNICEF.

PROSPECTS is a strategic four-year global partnership that supports host communities and displaced populations in eight countries across East and North Africa and the Arab States and which also includes the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

EU contributes EUR 1.3M for emergency reproductive health

Baghdad, 17 August 2021 - The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) received EUR 1.3 million euros from the European Union (EU) towards supporting emergency reproductive health services in hard-to-reach and secondary displacement areas in Iraq.

Women and girls of reproductive age, including women with disabilities, in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salahuddin governorates will benefit from the reproductive health services provided by UNFPA, such as gynaecological consultations, Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EmONC), family planning, maternal health and clinical management of rape.

“The need for health services in the country have increased due to the ongoing movement of population and the pandemic, especially for woman and girls. This contribution is crucial. It provides life-saving reproductive health services to conflict-affected

women in more than one governorate in Iraq,” said Christophe Reltien, the EU Humanitarian Aid Head of Office in Iraq.

UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, expressed her appreciation for the recent contribution: “We are extremely grateful for this renewed contribution from the EU. Women and girls in Iraq continue to face many challenges especially in terms of access to reproductive health services. The new funding will allow us to reach the

most vulnerable communities in the rural areas and displaced communities, despite the exacerbated humanitarian crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The EU is a long-standing partner of UNFPA in Iraq and a strong advocate for the reproductive health and rights of women and girls. Since 2015, the EU has contributed EUR 19.7 million in support of UNFPA’s humanitarian interventions in camps and host communities and secondary displacement areas in Iraq.



New Cardiac Surgery Centre at Al Salam Hospital gives hope to thousands



Mosul, 18 August 2021 - Four years ago, during the liberation from ISIL, nine out of 13 key public hospital centers in Mosul were left severely damaged. This brought down the city’s healthcare facilities to less than 30 percent of its actual capacity.

Supporting the health care system build back, UNDP is rehabilitating eight major health care institutions in Mosul. As a part of these larger efforts, the Cardiac Surgery Centre at Al Salam Hospital was recently established to provide much-needed medical treatment with cardiology diseases such as heart failure, coronary

artery diseases and strokes. The support has also included supplying medical equipment for the center.

Prior to ISIL, the hospital had upgraded their capacity with specialists across many cardiac disciplines to handle complex cases. However, they lacked the adequate infrastructure to support the growing needs of patients that came from across the country in need of cardiac surgeries. The hospital faced further setbacks during ISIL due to damage and disruption of services. This called for establishing new infrastructure to support the demand. On speaking to Ahmed Awad

Hammadi, 58, patient who is recovering from a recent heart surgery, he says, “I just successfully finished a heart valve transplant. This was possible due to the upgraded facilities in the hospital along with a dedicated and professional medical team. I am grateful for all the support, especially the services received.”

Today, the center performs complex open and close heart surgeries. UNDP supported the establishment of two inpatient wards with eight beds each, an administration office, two fully equipped operation theaters, a recovery room, and an intensive care unit. The center has a dedicated team of six doctors, four surgeons, two anesthesiologists and more than 50 administrative staff, serving 30,000 Iraqis in Ninewa.

Dr. Ammar Abdul Salam, 53, the Director of the Cardiac Surgery Department who treated Ahmed shares, “Going forward, we hope to expand the hospital and increase the number of beds and operation theatres as the centre serves people across the country.”

The Cardiac Surgery Centre at Al Salam Hospital was established through UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization with generous support from the European Union, Netherlands and Norway.

Ministry of Health and Environment, Ministry of Planning, UNFPA begin the fieldwork for the second Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH II)

Baghdad, 17 August 2021 – The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) at the Ministry of Planning, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Environment and UNFPA, began this week the fieldwork for the second Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH II).

The survey, which covers all

governorates in the Central South and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, will offer reliable data on women's health, roles in society and families, and their economic and political empowerment.

The integrated data will identify the progress made and the gaps in the economic, social, and health situation of women in Iraq in comparison to the

results of I-WISH I, conducted in 2011. The survey findings will enable the development of more effective and people-centred policies aimed at the elimination of gender-based violence and fulfilment of girls and women rights in Iraq.



Family Planning

UNFPA celebrates World Population Day: family planning is the answer for sustainable development

Baghdad, 11 July 2021 – Today, UNFPA jointly with the Ministry of Health and Environment, commemorated World Population Day, focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fertility. A panel of distinguished experts on economic development, population and demography, as well as reproductive health discussed the importance of reproductive rights and family planning for gender equality and sustainable development of Iraq.

Speaking at the event, Dr Riyadh Abdul Amir Al-Halfi, the Director-General of Public Health at the Ministry of Health emphasised the need to implement the national family planning strategy, not only through the increase of supply of contraceptives but also through increasing awareness about the importance of family planning for the economic stability of families and healthy future of children and mothers.



For her part, Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq said: “Individuals and couples must have universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning services regardless of humanitarian or economic challenges faced by society. Family planning leads to healthier mothers and children and indicates that women's rights in making informed decisions about the size of their family are ensured in society”.

“Women, especially young girls, must be empowered socially, economically and politically and must be encouraged to exercise their rights,” she added.

Dr Alexander Hamilton, the Economic and Statistics Adviser s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK) at the British embassy in Iraq, stated that supporting family planning has major returns on investment: “A one-dollar investment in family planning bring US\$ 120 return in health, social and economic benefits. For example, in Iraq, reducing the number of unintended pregnancies by

0.5% in five years would equal to 7% per capita increase in the education budget”.

The expert panellists elaborated on why family planning is a national priority and why it should be a key element in population policies to harness the demographic dividend. They shared examples of family planning positive impact on economic and social development from developed and middle-income countries.

Following the panel discussion, representatives from the Ministry of Planning, civil society, young people, and people with disabilities shared their thoughts on the topic. Key messages that came out from this exchange focused on the importance of changing attitudes towards fertility and the number of children and educating communities about healthy birth spacing to keep mothers alive and babies healthy, and the importance of the provision of quality and inclusive family planning services to all to enable young people, women and men to exercise their reproductive rights.

IOM Iraq supports Iraqi authorities in the drafting of the Iraq's first National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS)



Baghdad/Erbil, 15 July 2021 – Reducing the global suicide mortality rate by one third is both an indicator and a target of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. According to the WHO, over 700,000 people lose their lives to suicide worldwide every year. In Iraq, concern over the issue of suicide is heightened in communities facing post-war instability and displacement.

Recognizing that mental, physical, spiritual, emotional and social health are interconnected, IOM Iraq has supported the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers (GSICM) and relevant ministries in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to develop and propose a National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS) that takes a holistic approach to suicide prevention, improving the quality of services and strengthening support systems at national and community levels.

At separate events in Baghdad and in Erbil to unveil the proposal attended by a number of representatives from the Government of Iraq and KRG, NGOs, INGOs and civil society organizations, discussions took place envisioning a future without suicide. Conversations focused on the role of international and

local organizations in supporting the proposed strategy, taking note of action points and recommendations raised by attendees. Deliberations are ongoing within the GSICM and KRG.

The development of the NSPS proposal was supported by the Government of Germany's Federal Foreign Office.

If you or someone you know may be considering suicide, contact the nearest provider of mental health and psychosocial support services in your area.



IOM organized a training in Sulaymaniyah for medical students to introduce them to the field of MHPSS in emergency settings

Sulaymaniyah, 29 July 2021 - IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Programme organized a training in Sulaymaniyah for medical students from eight Iraqi universities to introduce them to the

field of MHPSS in emergency settings, build their knowledge and skills in a range of diverse technical topics and help them become strong advocates for mental health in their communities. From 10-17 July, the students

participated in several group activities and met with MHPSS experts from different backgrounds. This training programme was supported by the Government of Germany.

Education

UNESCO TVET Team visited Basra



Basra, 24 June 2021 - UNESCO TVET Team visited Basra and met with Government representatives, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the European Union funded projects; "Jobs Creation through Technical & Vocational Education System Strengthening & Labour Market Linkages - TVET phase 2" and "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities." On 20th and 21st June, the UNESCO Team met with the Director of

Vocational Education in the DoE and undertook a field visit to the Vocational School, (Al Rafedain Vocational School) to discuss the implementation of TVET 2 and to conduct a pre assessment of the school.

UNESCO Team visited and met with Director of the Khour Al Zubair VTC and the director of Basra VTC to review the new 4 TVET training workshops for Construction practical work, targeting 100 young, vulnerable youth in Basra

as a part of Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities project. The Team also discussed through the field visit to the carpentry workshop which hosting the Apprenticeship programme the progress with the 20 apprentices currently enrolled in the carpentry (Shanasheel) apprenticeship training programme set up under this project.

The UNESCO TVET Team visited the Southern Technical University, one of the four Higher Education institutions partners and beneficiary of the TVET-2. The Team met with the President and key staff at the university and discussed the opportunity to connect the outcomes of the vocational schools with the related colleges in the university, as well as the discussing their roles in the TVET Reform phase 2 project.

The UNESCO team concluded visit to the heritage houses of the Old City in Basra, which UNESCO is renovating under the EU funded project, Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities.

UNESCO workshop on “The guidelines for TVET professionals in Iraq to develop or revise Competency-Based Curriculum”



Baghdad, 30 June 2021 - UNESCO is running a workshop on “the Guidelines for TVET professionals in Iraq to develop or revise Competency-Based Curriculum” for two days with 31 participants from Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Acknowledging the central role a qualification framework has in the design, development and delivery of qualifications, since the TVQF’s development UNESCO has always ensured its inclusion as a key reference and tool in the development in all of its activities under TVET project. The priority has been to build

sustainable impact by leveraging outcomes from previous programme activities, ensuring effective and efficient use of investment, contributing to greater return for the investment made by all partners.

A participant centered approach, maximizes and utilizes national experience and expertise, leveraging participants’ knowledge and understanding of existing systems and processes.

The Iraq TVQF, informs and provides clear progression pathways for all learners regardless of the start and length of their journey.

The Iraq TVQF is a tool to ensure quality, standards and coherence in TVET, whilst still providing scope for flexibility and innovation in qualifications and curriculum development to maintain relevance with industry and employers.

UNESCO held the sixth Steering Committee meeting for “Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education with Gender Equality for Out of School Children (OOSC)” project

Baghdad, 1 July 2021 - UNESCO held the sixth Steering Committee meeting for “Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education with Gender Equality for Out of School Children (OOSC)” project funded by Educate A Child (EAC)/Education Above All (EAA) Foundation and the Government of Italy on 30 June and 1 July 2021, following the workshop for the officials of the Directorates of Education (DoE) from the targeted governorates (Baghdad, Ninewa, Salah Al Din, Babil, Thi Qar and Erbil) to enhance national capacity to discuss

and agree on how to improve the project implementation. The Steering Committee meeting was also attended by the donors from EAC/EAA and the Government of Italy online to discuss the up-to-date achievements, challenges on the ground and recommendations. The project has so far 134,561 OOSC enrolled (target 150,000) and trained 1,577 teachers (target 1,500). UNESCO is working shoulder to shoulder with MoE and DoE key officials and other counterparts to achieve project objectives.



70 women completed a vocational training in professional sewing

Fallujah, 06 July 2021 - On 24 June, IOM Iraq collaborated with the Office of the Mayor, municipal authorities and the Women’s Center for Empowerment in Anbar Governorate’s Fallujah district to hold a graduation ceremony for 70 women marking their completion of a one-month vocational training course in professional sewing.

“I benefited a lot from this workshop and learned valuable things, such as how to work on new designs. By working with my colleagues, I acquired many important ideas that contributed to enhancing my sewing level,” said Asmaa Hatem, one of the course

graduates. “[Attaining] a sewing certificate will be of great benefit, as it will be a source of income. I can work in many factories that produce clothes. I can also give training courses to people who want to learn sewing.”

The training course and graduation event are components of a project aimed at increasing women’s involvement in the labour market and expanding their access to income-generating opportunities.

This graduation ceremony was supported by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration



Strengthening cooperation and links across the TVET Sector in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 July 2021 - UNESCO met with the Director General of Labor and Vocational Training, Mr. Raed Jaffar, at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Baghdad today. The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation and links across the TVET Sector in Iraq. UNESCO Senior Project Officer Tim Mizen introduced the

Second Phase of the TVET reform programme funded by the EU and under implementation by UNESCO, and invited the Director General to join the Project's Steering Committee. There was also an opportunity for UNESCO to introduce the Vocational centre accreditation scheme developed in Phase one of the project. The

meeting was completed to a visit to the Iraqi-Korean Vocational Training Centre currently under renovation with the support of KOICA. A meeting was then held with KOICA and MoLSA to explore initiatives in TVET within MoLSA



Reopening schools cannot wait

Baghdad, 15 July 2021 - Statement of Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, in relation to the Global Joint Statement: "Following the spirit of the Joint Statement, all children in Iraq, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized and those at risk of not coming back to school, should be provided with support to continue learning, including those in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. The current situation in Iraq is an opportunity to support gradual safe return to schools and a blended learning approach, with more flexible systems and, increasingly, using digital tools. UNICEF will continue to support the Ministry of Education in the development of this blended approach which will allow every child to acquire skills, knowledge and be prepared for adulthood"

Joint statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay

Paris/New York, 15 July 2021 – "It's been 18 months since the COVID-19 outbreak started and education for millions of children is still disrupted. As of today, primary and secondary schools are shuttered in 19 countries, affecting over 156 million students.

This should not go on. Schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen.

In their efforts to limit transmission, governments have too often shut down schools and kept them closed for prolonged periods, even when the epidemiological situation didn't warrant it. These actions were frequently taken as a first recourse rather than a last measure.

The losses that children and young people will incur from not being in school may never be recouped. From learning loss, mental distress, exposure to violence and abuse, to missed school-based meals and vaccinations or reduced development of social skills, the consequences for children will be felt in their academic achievement and societal engagement as well as physical and mental health. The most affected are often children in low-resource settings who do not have access to remote learning tools, and the youngest children who are at key developmental stages.

The losses for parents and caretakers are equally heavy. Keeping children at home is forcing parents around the world to leave their jobs, especially in countries with no or limited family leave policies.

That's why reopening schools for in-

person learning cannot wait.

It cannot wait for cases to go to zero. There is clear evidence that primary and secondary schools are not among the main drivers of transmission. Meanwhile, the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools is manageable with appropriate mitigation strategies in most settings. The decision to open or close schools should be based on risk analysis and the epidemiological considerations in the communities where they are situated.

Reopening schools cannot wait for all teachers and students to be vaccinated. With the global vaccine shortages plaguing low and middle-income countries, vaccinating frontline workers and those most at risk of severe illness and death will remain a priority. All schools should provide in-person learning as soon as possible, without barriers to access, including not mandating vaccination prior to school entry.

Ahead of the Global Education Meeting on July 13, we urge decisionmakers and governments to prioritize the safe reopening of schools to avoid a generational catastrophe.

"Closing schools mortgages our future for unclear benefits to our present. We must prioritize better. We can reopen schools safely, and we must."

UNESCO team visits Ministry of Planning, discuss TVET project

Baghdad, 19 July 2021 - The TVET-2 UNESCO team met today with the Deputy Minister of Planning, Dr. Maher Johan, and the Director General of Human Development, Dr Maha Abul Karim. The meeting reviewed progress to date in the implementation of the Project as well as reviewing in more details the Project Outcomes. The structure and agenda for the upcoming Steering committee was presented by Tim Mizen, the UNESCO Senior Project Officer. Dr Maher praised the efforts of the UNESCO team and

expressed his strong interest in the project and offered his assistance in

case of any impediment to full project implementation.



1001 Nights series launched by the Ministry of Education and supported by UNICEF to provide alternative learning solutions reaches over 20,000,000 views on Facebook

Baghdad, 26 July 2021 - In Iraq, over 10 million children could not access their education due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In response, UNICEF and its partners in Iraq continue its efforts to provide alternative learning platforms and support education initiatives for the most vulnerable children in Iraq.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in Iraq have partnered Big Bad Boo Productions, through the Inc.'s 1001 Nights Life Skills and Civic Education Program (the 1001 Nights Program), which uses cartoons, discussions and activities to teach children life skills and build shared values and friendship and provide emotional well-being support throughout Iraq.

In order to ensure children and families are able to access the program at home, Big Bad Boo also launched an online campaign on Facebook, which 93% of the viewers responded they either "like" or "love" the program.

As of June 2021, the total views across all episodes of the 1001 Nights Program on Facebook in its first three months is 20.6 million - 11.8M views in the Arabic version and 8.8M in the Kurdish version.

The program includes at-home, in-

school and blended models so that children can also continue their learning during school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This multi-platform (TV, radio, internet and printed media) program is designed to teach children civic values, critical thinking and various life skills.

The partnership will implement the 1001 Nights Program and will reach over 50,000 children (20,000 internally displaced, returnees and Syrian refugee children, as well as 30,000 children in regular schools).

A total of 1,667 teachers and facilitators will be given student guidance materials, which parents can also use to engage with their children for successful distance-based learning.

"1001 Nights is a prime example of how high-quality digital content can bring to life learning and psycho-social development for children facing some of life's most daunting situations" says Rory Robertshaw, Chief of Education for UNICEF in Iraq.

"Partnerships such as this one are essential in providing much needed support for children in Iraq who have missed out on their learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic" says Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. "Business as usual is not enough as we respond to this pandemic. Innovation has the power to achieve and elevate our ambitions for education and all that education promises" she explained.



Creating employment opportunities through TVET reform

Baghdad, 27 July 2021 - The first Project Steering Committee was held today for the European Union funded Project, "Jobs Creation Through Technical & Vocational Education System Strengthening & Labor Market Linkages". This second Phase of the TVET reform project is under implementation by UNESCO and is focused on developing 5 Centres of Vocational Excellence in the Ministry of Education's Vocational schools and

reforming the curriculum of the 7 Technical Universities and Polytechnics through the application of the Bologna process.

The meeting was opened by Dr Hamid Khalaf of the Education Initiative, who reflected on the achievements of previous project and emphasized the importance of ensuring sustainability of the reforms to date. Dr Falah Al Quaisi the deputy Minister of Education who thanked the EU for

funding the second phase and stressed the centrality of TVET in helping to rebuild the economy and deliver meaningfully employment for young Iraqis. Ms. Barbara Egger, the Head of Cooperation Section at the Delegation of the EU to Iraq renewed European Union commitment to support economic development and job creation in Iraq. Quality education, and in particular TVET, is crucial to best prepare Iraqi Youth with all relevant skills that help them to successfully find a decent job in Iraq's competitive labor market. Mr. Paolo Fontani, the UNESCO Representative in Iraq pointed out that the establishments of 5 centres of excellence would act as incubators, driving quality improvements across the MoE Vocational schools and transforming the TVET provision in Iraq.

The meeting approved the Terms of reference of the committee and then the Senior Project Officer Tim Mizen presented the project Outcomes and the 6 monthly workplan, which was fully endorsed by the meeting."



First Steering Committee meeting of GA-PVE-E project

Baghdad, 11 August 2021 - The first Steering Committee meeting of the Gendered Approach to Preventing Violent Extremism through Education (GA-PVE-E) project chaired by H.E Dr. Falah Al Qaisi, Deputy Minister of Education was organized on 11 August 2021 in Baghdad. The meeting was attended by H.E Mr. Ulric Shannon, Ambassador of Canada to Iraq and Prof. Dr. Tariq Ali Jassim, Director of Education and Culture Office, Prime Minister's Advisory Commission and the representatives from Al Anbar and Ninewa governorates. UNESCO Iraq Office was represented by Mr. Santosh Khatri, Chief of Education.

Building and extending on the foundation of the previous two projects implemented with the support from the Governments of Japan and the

Netherlands from 2018 - 2020, the project aims to strengthen the capacities of education actors in 250 schools in Al Anbar and Ninewa governorates to cultivate resilience against violent extremism.

The meeting brought together representatives of ZOA International, Iraq Institute for Development, Directorates of Education in Al Anbar and Ninewa and representatives of relevant General Directorates of the Ministry of Education. The partners reviewed the progress of the project since inception and discussed challenges and reaffirmed their commitments to achieve the expected results of the project.

In their opening remarks, H.E the Deputy Minister of Education and the Representative of the Prime Minister's

Advisory Commission reaffirmed the urgency of the project in trying to address violent extremism in Al Anbar, Ninewa, and hopefully the whole of Iraq and beyond. They reiterated the importance of the project and its participatory approaches of co-created with the Government, and most importantly, the beneficiaries on the ground. They also repeated their commitment to ensure that the project receives the best support possible from the Government.



UNESCO team visits Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University (ATU)



Baghdad, 15 August 2021 - A UNESCO delegation headed by the senior project officer Mr. Tim Mizen visited Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University (ATU) to discuss the possibility of implementing the second phase (Bologna educational path) of upgrading the Iraqi vocational education. The university chancellor, Prof. Mudhaffar Sadiq Al-Zuhairy,

welcomed the visitor and discussed the mechanisms to activate the second phase of promoting Iraqi vocational education.

During the workshop held at the Center for Continuing Education, the university Chancellor explained that the university had earlier organized several workshops to develop educational curricula and education systems in Iraq. In particular, the Bologna educational path and the possibility of applying it in one of the university's scientific departments as a model. The selected department is tourism technologies at Al-Najaf and Karbala technical institutes campuses. Prof. Al-Zuhairy also pointed out that UNESCO organized several workshops with the support and funding of the European Union in this direction.

For his part, Mr. Tim Mizen indicated

that UNESCO is supporting this promising project to enable the Iraqi technical universities to keep pace with their international counterparts, particularly the universities of the European Union, in terms of the educational systems and approved curricula. He also praised the efforts made by the ATU university, which have witnessed a remarkable development recently in various fields. During the workshop, the Director of the Studies and Planning Department, Dr. Faris Muhammad Ali, and the Director of the Student Affairs Department, Dr. Raad Taha, gave presentations on the central concept of the Bologna educational path and its implementation mechanisms. Dr. Ann Catherine from UNESCO also attended the workshop via the Zoom platform.

UNESCO supports the Ministry of Higher Education's initiative to implement Bologna Process

Erbil, 9 August 2021 - UNESCO met today with the Chair of the Higher Committee for Bologna Implementation in the Ministry of Higher Education KRG, Dr. Mohammed Hussein. UNESCO updated the Chair on the progress in Bologna implementation to date with the 3 Technical Universities in Kurdistan and the planned future activities. Dr. Mohammed thanked UNESCO for their support and invited them to join the next meeting of the Committee to present an update on the latest developments in Bologna.



UNESCO is working to upgrade TVET across Iraq and Kurdistan through the

TVET 2 Reform programme, funded by the European Union.

UNESCO works with 7 technical universities to align their curriculums with the Bologna process



Erbil, 4 August 2021 - UNESCO is implementing the European Union funded TVET 2 reform programme to increase the employability of Iraq youth graduating from Vocational schools and Technical Universities. A key component of this task is to reform the

Bachelor programmes offered to ensure they meet the needs of Iraqi society and the labor market. To this end UNESCO are working with the Ministry of Higher Education and 7 Technical Universities to implement the Bologna process in their degree programmes. A meeting was held today with the President of Northern Technical University, Dr. Alya'a Abbas Al Attar and her team. The meeting reviewed nominations for the Bologna committees and gave advice on the first steps in the road map for implementation. The NTU Team expressed their thanks to UNESCO and the EU and looked forward to a successful collaboration. Within the same project UNESCO

TVET Team visited the Erbil Agricultural School to review the upcoming workplan and to audit the suitability of the school to join the project. The Headmaster, Mr. Hajar, welcomed the collaboration and requested for UNESCO's assistance in transforming the current training courses into practical oriented courses to meet the evolving employment needs.

The UNESCO Team met with the President of Erbil Polytechnic University Dr Kawa Sherwany. The President expressed his commitment to fully implement Bologna, explained the way ahead for Bologna implementation and build on the work already ongoing in EPU.

UNESCO and the EU launch the Educational TV in Kurdistan

Erbil, 20 August 2021 - Within the UNESCO project "Access to inclusive quality primary and secondary education for IDPs, Returnees, Remainees and Refugees in crisis affected areas in Iraq", UNESCO and the EU launch the Educational TV in Kurdistan. The event was attended by the Minister of Education (KRG). Mr. Alan Hama Saeed, and the Governor of Erbil Mr. Omed Khoshnaw.



UNESCO and CMC of Iraq, together with telecoms providers, signed for the provision of internet connectivity and WIFI devices for 1,500 schools for the rollout of an Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in 2021

Baghdad, 24 August 2021 - UNESCO and the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) of Iraq, together with telecoms providers Asiacell, Korek and Zain, signed for the provision of internet connectivity and WIFI devices for 1,500 schools for the rollout of an Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in 2021. An additional 1,500 schools will receive internet connectivity in 2022.

"EMIS enables evidence-based, timely decision making for better management of educational service delivery towards improved quality of learning in Iraq. UNESCO is working in partnership with UNICEF and the European Union to deliver a tailor-made EMIS for the Ministry of Education. Today's EMIS is digital and digital EMIS needs good connectivity and engagement of the



government, private sector and development partners" said Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq.

Echoing the words of Dr. Ali Moaed CEO of the CMC, Deputy Ministry of Education Dr. Falah Al-Qaisi, and the Representatives of the Telecom

Companies, Mr. Fontani further added "this is an excellent example of public-private partnership efforts to improve the monitoring of quality education, and we hope that this initiative opens further opportunities for collaboration in delivering quality learning opportunities in Iraq".

WFP met with the Ministry of Education to confirm next steps for its School Feeding programme

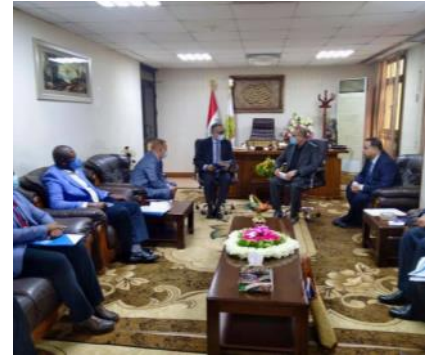
Baghdad, 24 August 2021 - World Food Programme met today with the Ministry of Education to confirm next steps for its School Feeding programme. The attendees discussed how the programme has a positive impact on children's wellbeing, including as an incentive for Iraqi children to attend schools, especially those living in the most vulnerable communities.

The plan is to increase the numbers of students receiving school meals in the

new 2021-2022 academic year, by 185,000 children: focusing on those who are in most need of assistance.

More funding support will be needed to reach greater numbers of children, but Deputy Minister Hussein Sabri al Lami remained optimistic that this will be no hindrance to continuing the school feeding programme in Iraq.

"We make available our resources in the Ministry of Education of the Iraqi government, towards the success of the school feeding programme."



Youth

UNICEF Iraq launches the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) to enhance dialogue between UNICEF and young people in Iraq



Baghdad, 8 July 2021 - UNICEF announced its renewed commitment to support inclusive meaningful systematic participation of young people in Iraq, through the creation of the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG), with the goal of empowering young people to be civically engaged in their communities.

The YPAG is an advisory body formed as an institutional mechanism for consultation and dialogue between UNICEF and young people in the country, as well as to participate in the

activities of UN agencies affecting young people. The group will represent the Iraqi young people in local, national, and regional forums; advise the organization on how to engage young people in humanitarian context and development; and strengthen youth participation and advocacy in youth-led initiatives.

The YPAG consists of twenty-four members, with young people representing all governorates in Iraq. Members of the YPAG were selected through an inclusive application process with young people, in which especially those from vulnerable and underrepresented backgrounds were encouraged to apply. "We are excited to join forces with the newly formed YPAG to set a generation of young people on the course to empowerment and leadership in their communities and beyond. This is particularly critical now to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that young people's voices are heard, and

they continue to have access to the right tools and support to thrive", Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Iraq Representative noted.

The YPAG combines mentorship and skills building to equip young people with the key resources they need to identify problems and challenges in their communities and find solutions to these problems. The members of the YPAG build skills and resilience, while UNICEF and their communities benefit from their contributions and solutions.

"Launched in April 2021 and supported by UNICEF, the YPAG provides an institutional mechanism for consultation between young people and the UN Country Team on a variety of issues. It is very exciting for us as an organization to engage young people as partners. In their short tenure, the YPAG has already supported UNICEF and partners by contributing to our ongoing work." said Mads Sorensen, Chief, Adolescent Development and Participation.

More players than ever coming together to participate in chess

Erbil, 20 July 2021 - For International Chess Day [20 July], 16 players from the refugees, displaced, and host communities competed in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The event was organized by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization to promote inclusion, social cohesion, and equality.

At Kawergosk Syrian refugee camp near Erbil, chess classes are part of summer school for many refugee

children. It's recreation, strategy building, fun, and a great game to build IQ and problem-solving skills for children. Catch up classes, sports and recreation are run in all refugee camps in Iraq supported by UNHCR and partners.

Over the past few months, the overall interest in chess is reported to have doubled, with more players than ever coming together to participate in chess events that are being increasingly held through online platforms.



UNIDO cellphone repair training opens employment opportunities for the youth in Sheikhan

Sheikhan District, 25 July 2021 - Ibrahim Abdulkarim greets customers in the mobile shop where he works with the energy of his youth. He has recently completed a course on mobile repair and is excited to put his skills and new equipment to use. But behind the excitement, there is a sadness.

"Yes I'm very young, but I'm like an old man because of what I have seen with my family. I was born in 2001, but life has aged me," he said.

Ibrahim and his family are from Mosul. The family, he has eight siblings, had a good life in the northern Iraqi city. They had a nice house, good jobs and schools. But they didn't have safety.

When he was 13 years old, his older brother came home one day and announced to the family they had to leave. With nothing but the clothes on their backs, the family left Mosul and came to Sheikhan. It was just one week before Islamic State group (ISIS) militants seized the city in the summer of 2014.

Ibrahim did not return to school. It was considered a luxury his family could not afford. Instead he had to start working to help support the family. An older brother began to sell phone accessories on a street corner and Ibrahim worked with him. Two years ago, they moved their business into a shop.

"Since I was a child and held a mobile, I liked to play with it and figure out how it works, but I never had the chance or money to take a course," he said. He got that chance this year when he was offered a spot in a training course from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The 17 day-long course taught participants mobile repairs and basic programming. The training was part of the Japanese Government funded project of 'promotion of social stabilization and acceleration of economic recovery in Nineveh Governorate of Iraq'.

After completing the training course,

he was given a repair kit including tools, multimeter, and DC power supply and a laptop. His equipment is carefully set up in his brother's small shop and Ibrahim proudly wears a UNIDO t-shirt.

"I'm very happy with the course," he said. "I learned what I wanted to."

The UNIDO course has given him formal training he had to miss when he left school to begin working at a young age. It's set him up on a career path and Ibrahim is eyeing a goal of learning more about mobile phones, expanding his knowledge into computers, and maybe one day, opening his own shop.



"Breastfeeding acts as a baby's first vaccine, providing critical protection from diseases and death" - UNICEF

Baghdad, 2 August 2021- Today marks the launch of the World Breastfeeding Week (WBW), an awareness-raising campaign to remind everyone that breastfeeding is every baby's best source of nutrition, bolstering brain development and with lifelong benefits for mother and baby. Under the theme of WBW 2021, "Protect breastfeeding, a shared responsibility", UNICEF is calling on governments to protect and promote women's access to skilled breastfeeding counselling, a critical component of breastfeeding support, and to ensure safe spaces conducive to breastfeeding in homes, communities and workplaces alike.

In Iraq, barely 1 out of every 3 children[1] receive breastfeeding within the first hour of life, a key indicator of



support for breastfeeding that is associated with successful establishment of breastfeeding and child survival. The statistics are even worse on the other key indicator on breastfeeding, with only one in four Iraqi children breastfeeding exclusively for the first 6 months of life[2] (based on the 2018 Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey).

Mothers need support from their families and all involved stakeholders, both to get started and to sustain breastfeeding especially, during the COVID-19 pandemic with its associated social upheaval and changes in healthcare and work practices.

Vaccine effectiveness is expected to be similar in lactating women as in other adults. UNICEF recommends vaccination in lactating women as in other adults and does not recommend to discontinue breastfeeding because of vaccination.

In addition, UNICEF recommends that mothers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be encouraged to initiate or continue to breastfeed. Mothers should be counselled that the numerous benefits of breastfeeding substantially outweigh the potential risks for transmission to the new-born or young infant, who are very rarely

affected by the virus.

"During this terrible pandemic, it is our shared responsibility more than ever, through our commitment, strong action and joint work to ensure that all mothers have access to skilled breastfeeding support and counselling, empowering them to give every baby everywhere the best possible start in life" said Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

UNICEF works in Iraq to strengthen breastfeeding-related policies, supporting the government to align national policies and guidelines with international standards. UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Health on the implementation of the baby-friendly hospitals initiative and considering infant and young children feeding practice as a cornerstone in early childhood development, key to ensure full brain development. Furthermore, UNICEF will continue to support the Government of Iraq, the private sector and civil society to protect breastfeeding and ensure that all babies in Iraq can develop at their maximum potential.

[1] 32%, according to MICS 2018 - a v a i l a b l e a t : <https://www.unicef.org/iraq/media/481/file/MICS6.pdf>

Finland, UNFPA visit youth centres piloted for youth with disabilities inclusion

Mosul, 2 August 2021 - The Finnish Ambassador to Iraq, Mr Vesa Häkkinen, and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, met today with civil society representatives and young people with disabilities in Mosul. During the meeting, they spoke on engaging young people, especially the most vulnerable and those living in hard-to-reach areas in Nineveh Governorate, in youth volunteerism and providing them with access to reproductive health and gender-based violence services. They also discussed with young people with disabilities their challenges and needs.

Commenting on the visit, Mr Häkkinen emphasised that Finland's number one priority in development policy is to strengthen the rights and position of women, girls and the most vulnerable. "In Iraq, our goal is to support the work in Nineveh. Nineveh is one of the areas

that suffered the most from the terrorism of the Islamic States in Iraq and the Levant. An example of our intervention is the opening of an honorary consulate in the Governorate in March. For us, Nineveh represents the rebirth of Iraq and we will remain committed to supporting the most in need".

Speaking to young people who attended the meeting, Dr Columbia said: "Youth are the drivers of the country development. We will continue to advocate for the rights of young people, including adolescents and youth with disabilities. We strongly believe that they should have equal rights and opportunities for personal and professional growth".

The Finnish Ambassador's visit comes as UNFPA and Finland team up to strengthen the technical capacity of youth centres to provide student-



centred educational services, including life skills and civic engagement education for adolescents with disabilities.

UNFPA plans to scale up its interventions focusing on the needs and rights of the most vulnerable youth to be educated, engaged and empowered as leaders. Young people targetted in this project include young people with disabilities, girls and boys from impoverished areas, refugees and internally displaced young people.

Cultivate a culture of dialogue among youth

Baghdad, 10 August 2021 - On August 2, IOM Iraq launched a series of workshops on Debate, Advocacy and Peacebuilding Skills. These workshops will continue until September 6 in the districts of Saadiya, Jalawla and Khanaqin in Diyala Governorate, with expected participation from 60 young men and women.

The aim of these workshops is to create an influential youth cadre with polished skills in the field of dialogue

and debate, as well as promoting the cultural of dialogue and exchange of experiences between young people. The workshops will provide space to challenge common understanding, with a view to developing joint steps to face social and cultural challenges.

The Debate, Advocacy and Peacebuilding Skills Workshops are supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).



Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNFPA celebrate Youth in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 August 2021 - Ahead of International Youth Day, the Ministry of Youth & Sports and UNFPA organised a bicycle race to celebrate the young people of Iraq, and advocate for their empowerment and engagement in building a peaceful and healthy society. Cyclists of all ages, young girls and boys from communities, and youth activists joined the race to show their solidarity in supporting youth and their inclusion in the sustainable development of Iraq.

Mr Adnan Darjal, Minister of Youth and Sports, Ms. Evan Faek Jabro, Minister of Migration and Displacement, and Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, launched the race followed by more than 200 cyclists, girls and boys.

The celebration continued with a performance of a musical band of young people with disabilities and a presentation of handicrafts produced by local women-led organisations.

UNFPA supports young people of Iraq,



girls and boys, to have equal opportunities to develop their full

potential and contribute to their communities.

Youth are the future: UNDP Iraq celebrates International Youth Day



Baghdad, 11 August 2021 - Over half of Iraq's total population of more than 40 million are under the age of 25. Young people are one of the most valuable resources for building a prosperous and inclusive Iraq, a country at a pivotal stage of development, following decades of conflict, economic crises and now, the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP Iraq engages with youth from all areas of Iraqi society, across a variety of programmes including community stabilization, social cohesion, security, environment, climate change, and innovation.

To celebrate International Youth Day, we asked young people supported by UNDP Iraq to raise their voices and share their thoughts on the importance of involving youth in decision-making toward a better future.

"By empowering young people, the roots of extremism and violence will be eradicated, and we will head towards recovery." -Kawthar Almohammedi, 30, Member of the Anbar Youth for Peace Group supported by UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme.

"Iraqi youth have an incredibly unique ability to adapt and endure challenges and to keep on creating wonderful

things. It is particularly important to involve youth in major decisions, as they understand people and their current needs." - Bilal, 22, engineering student from Basra and participant in the UNDP Local Area Development Programme's community reporter training.

"Giving young people a space to make their own decisions builds a broader base for citizen participation and creates stronger and more inclusive societies. Young people in Iraq are ambitious and possess the ability to work intensively toward achieving their goals." - Shumoos Ahmed, 21, Member of a youth-serving organization participating in UNDP's Youth Leadership Programme.

"I participated in this programme because it encourages youth to work hand in hand to make fundamental change, and leads young people to take a role in important decisions. My message for youth is that they need to cooperate together to build a new Iraq." - Nra Saado, 21, Beneficiary of vocational training under UNDP's Security Sector Reform Community Security Integration Pilot Project.

"Young people play in an important role in Iraq's development. I believe every

single young Iraqi has unique abilities and talents. But due to lack of exposure and resources, many young Iraqis need the right kind of support and encouragement to push them towards a better future. Therefore, we need to empower more young people to ensure a better future for Iraq."- Saqr Abdul Karim Mihna, 23, Founder, Al-Basha sweets and pastries, and recipient of a small business grant from UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme.

"It has been incredibly challenging for students to pick up our education post-ISIS. The pandemic has also brought its own set of challenges to the campus. But through all of this, there has been one common thread, and that is to never give up. We are an incredibly determined and ambitious batch of young people." - Haneen Hani, 27, Graduate, College of Science, Mosul University, and beneficiary of Mosul University rehabilitation by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization.

"Today, youth in Iraq represent the largest segment of society. It is very important to involve them in decision-making as they have a broad and contemporary political, social, and economic outlook that will generate many different solutions." - Firdaws Nadhum, 26, Member of a youth-serving organization participating in UNDP's Youth Leadership Programme.

"The most important thing that young people can do for Iraq is self-development and to always be up to date. It is so important include young people in decision making process, because young people are the future." - Fatima Nasr Abdullah, 24, a campaigner with Spark, and participant in the community reporters training under Headway programme.

Youth-led action for climate resilience

UNICEF and UNV -Joint Press Release on International Youth Day 2021

Baghdad 12 August 2021 - The 12th of August marks the International Youth Day every year, a day to celebrate and mainstream young peoples' voices, actions, and initiatives, as well as their meaningful, universal, and equitable engagement.

This year's theme, "Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health", highlights the success of global efforts through the meaningful participation of young

people.

In the region, Euphrates & Tigris rivers are currently experiencing drought conditions, resulting in lower river flow, and affecting dam storage. The current season is the second driest in 40 years. Iraq is anticipating a serious drought this summer following a particularly dry winter and reduced river flow caused by upstream damming programs by riparian countries.

Climate change has potential impacts on food security such as reduction in wheat production, decrease in surface

water storage, drying of shallower wells due to insufficient groundwater recharge, and an increase in the cost of water. If the dry conditions continue, and the water reservoirs are not replenished, the population will face an acute water shortage for irrigation of the next cropping season.

To mark the occasion, young people, the change-makers for a better future, converged and led the discussion on issues around food security in their communities in Fallujah, Anbar district. The event was attended by Anbar's Governor, Dr. Ai Farhan

Youth-led action for climate resilience *(continued)*

AlDulaimy, and UNICEF Iraq Representative, Sheema SenGupta. An online discussion event on youth engagement in food security led by young people also took place in Duhok governorate.

“As we celebrate young people together with our partners, we must ensure they are heard and included in the decision-making process, by highlighting solutions developed by them to address food security challenges.” said Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative to Iraq during the event.

Zain provided entertainment and distributed some promotional materials. The agencies commended all their partners including Zain for being

allies to young people in Iraq. UNICEF and UNV are working closely with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to mainstream civic engagement and volunteering among young people across Iraq for sustainable development, including for environment and climate change. A new national innovative initiative is being jointly set up, with the aim of providing young people with access to a wide range of engagement opportunities in different sectors.

The two UN agencies reiterate calls for an inclusive mechanism that ensures support from decision-makers to address the youth’s needs to overcome the situations and work together in

bringing change to their community. We must come together and show our commitment by dedicating resources to young people to achieve sustainable development for all.



Sport is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties!

Mosul, 13 August 2021 - The Importance of Sports in Youth Development and Social Reconciliation - Sport is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties! UN-Habitat has been engaging youth in sports activities to promote sustainable development and peace, as well as solidarity and respect in war-affected communities. Supported by the European Union, UN Habitat has been organizing sport events such as football and volleyball tournaments in Mosul, Yathrib and Heet to engage the youth into healthy recreation activities.



UNESCO and the Digital Development Center launch the "Young Developer" project



Baghdad, 15 August 2021 - UNESCO and the Digital Development Center (DDC) launched the "Young Developer" project for children. The

project aims to build children's skills in the fields of software and application development, it is a step towards eradicating digital illiteracy among

marginalized and vulnerable groups in Iraqi society.

The project aims to target 1,000 children from all governorates who will be enrolled in a month-long intense training online with free access to the building Apps platforms.

UNESCO encourages local initiatives to achieve the implications of digital inclusion and digital literacy in societies, and with the help of the Digital Development Center, which is sponsoring this initiative, 30 children will be able to develop and build their games and applications in the first training course.

This unique project is based on an interactive training method delivered by trainers who are close in age to the students. The projects certified trainer is a 14-year-old who has been trained and qualified to work as a certified trainer in App development.

Head of Hikma National Movement visited Al-Nouri Mosque

Mosul, 04 July 2021 - Ammar al-Hakim, Head of Hikma National Movement, visited Al-Nouri Mosque to witness the progress that has taken place on site, in the framework of the UNESCO project to #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul supported by the UAE. He expressed appreciation for UNESCO's efforts to restore the emblematic mosque.



The story of Abu Suhaib and his family

Mosul, 20 July 2021 - Since the liberation of Mosul in 2017, UNESCO has consistently sought to support the residents of the Old City and to bring life back to its neighborhoods.

Abu Suhaib is a 56-year-old resident of the Al-Nouri Mosque Area in the Old City. The house where he lived with his family of five was severely damaged during the fighting that accompanied the city's liberation.

Abu Suhaib and his family are one of the beneficiaries of UNESCO's "Reviving the Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project generously funded by the European Union, as part of flagship initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul". His house is being restored with attention to its traditional design and its beautiful architectural features. Nearby public spaces and alleys are also being restored and improved, and public lighting installed.

Joy and appreciation were circulating

in the old serpentine alleyways of the neighborhoods and the happiness of Abu Suhaib and his sons was palpable. "Thank you, UNESCO" were the words coming from their mouths and then

there were other voices wishing that UNESCO would extend its intervention and recover other parts of the Old City in a spirit of hope for a bright, better future.



The Speaker of the Council of Representatives arrived in Mosul to voice his commitment to the city's renewal

Mosul, 31 July 2021 - H.E. The Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mohammed Al Halbousi, arrived in Mosul to voice his commitment to the city's renewal. During his visit, Al Halbousi toured the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex to witness the progress that has taken place on site, in the framework of the UNESCO project to #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul, supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



UNESCO Iraq team welcomed the visit of the EU Ambassador to the World Heritage site of the Erbil Citadel

Erbil, 3 August 2021 - Mr. Huth accompanied by Mr. Nihad Qoja, Head of the High Commission for the Revitalization of the Erbil Citadel and UNESCO project staff visited the Erbil Citadel site and appreciated the progress of the UNESCO project “Support to livelihoods through cultural heritage development”.

The project is generously funded by the European Union MADAD Fund and aims to ensure dignified, sustainable livelihoods and create economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Iraqis in the cultural heritage sector.



Iraqi Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, visits UNESCO works in Mosul

Mosul, 17 August 2021 - Iraqi Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, arrived in Mosul to voice his commitment to the city’s renewal. During his visit, PM Al-Kadhimi toured the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex and Al-Tahera Church to witness the progress that has taken place on site, in the framework of the UNESCO project to Revive the Spirit of Mosul, supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The battle for Mosul left behind an estimated 8 million tons of rubble and destroyed prominent historical landmarks. Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Tahera Church were left destroyed. The Prime Minister could witness the progress made and get a firsthand briefing of the challenges ahead.

The Prime Minister was welcomed by UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, the local government, Sunni Waqf and SBAH, actively involved in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic landmarks of Mosul. His Excellency thanked UNESCO and its partners for their efforts in restoring historic landmarks in Mosul. he added, “construction began, and smiles have returned to the face of the Moslawis, with hope and optimism in building a bright future for all Iraqis”.

This rebuilding of historic landmarks is made possible with the generous support of the United Arab Emirates and coordinated work with the Government of Iraq, local partners and international experts. It is being undertaken as a major part of UNESCO’s Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, launched the flagship initiative “Revive the Spirit of Mosul”



as the Organization’s response for the recovery of one of Iraq’s iconic cities. Reviving Mosul is not only about reconstructing heritage sites, it is about empowering the population as agents of change involved in the process of rebuilding their city through culture and education. It is with a strong message of hope and resistance to Iraq

and to the world, a message that an inclusive, cohesive and equitable society is the future that Iraqis deserve, that the “Revive the spirit of Mosul” Flagship Initiative was born. Other donors of the Initiative include the European Union, the Flanders, The Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Sweden, Italy, Latvia and Germany.



Staff Voices: Behind-the-scenes of a high-profile visit to Iraq



Baghdad, 2 July 2021 - In this "Staff Voices", our colleague Lindsay Harkness draws back the curtain on what it takes when the UN-Habitat Executive Director visits a "volatile environment exacerbated by a pandemic".

03:50

I'm awake. Alarmingly awake. Terrified to sleep in and be startled awake by a Security Officer banging on my door when I hold up an 18-car convoy. Today is day 4 of a 6-day visit by the UN-Habitat Executive Director (ED) to Iraq following three months of astronomical

planning, for good reason of course, it's a volatile environment exacerbated by a pandemic.

05:15

Outside the camp is blanketed by silence, even the birds are sleeping, only a lazy cat strolls past. I have PPE slung over one arm, 3 bottles of Gatorade and snacks in a Lululemon bag and trying to locate which of the many white, UN marked, armoured vehicles will be my home for the day.

06:30

On our way to Heet, a 3-hour drive west of Baghdad. The team has been planning this specific event for over a month, combined official handover of infrastructure and inauguration of a park. Planning every detail ranging from how the 18-car convoy will navigate the narrow residential roads without having to turn around to the colour, and size of the scissors that will be used to cut the ribbon at the ceremony.

09:30

18 armoured vehicles drive up the wrong road and must now navigate 10-point turns to untangle themselves, seriously, but the scissors were beautiful!

10:00

18 dignitaries have arrived and we're on time!! Yesterday one interpreter tested positive for COVID and we somehow managed to find a backup in time.

12:30

8 of us have been running around in the background for 2.5 hours smoothing, facilitating, monitoring, moving, organizing, and everyone is super happy and ready for an incredible lunch at the Mayor's office.

19:00

Back in the compound, the day is over, and the delegation is at the airport. The UN compound is buzzing with post-work exercisers and dozens of cats lazing about in the cool grass unaware that they are in the presence of greatness - a team of heroes that managed to host an event for a VVIP in 40-degree heat, on very little sleep, during a pandemic, and heightened security environment. Well done everyone!

About the Author: Lindsay Harkness works for UN-Habitat based in Baghdad, Iraq. She is now in her fourth year in Iraq.

New UNICEF Representative in Iraq presents credentials

Baghdad, 06 July 2021 - Today, the new UNICEF Representative to Iraq, Ms. Sheema Sen Gupta, presented her credentials to H.E. Dr. Ali Shamran, Head of the Protocol Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad. "The presentation of my credentials today to the Government of Iraq will further strengthen our existing partnership with the Government to support our programmes in Iraq and to help create the conditions in which every child in Iraq can develop and thrive", stated Sheema Sen Gupta. HE Dr. Shamran also confirmed the Ministry's readiness to facilitate and support the mission of the new UNICEF Representative in Iraq.



UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert extends her best wishes to the people of Iraq on Eid-ul-Adha

Baghdad, 19 July 2021 – Once again, the Feast of Sacrifice, Eid-ul-Adha, arrives in challenging times, with great sacrifices made in the fight against COVID-19.

This is traditionally a time to give, to show compassion and celebrate with loved ones. This year, we must again find ways to do so while remaining safe

and healthy.

As we reflect on the many sacrifices made, let us stand in solidarity with those less fortunate, and reaffirm our determination to work together towards a brighter future for all.

Best wishes of peace and good health, Adha Mubarak!



The Canal Hotel bombing (19 August 2003) was a massive loss for the United Nations and the humanitarian community



Baghdad, 19 August 2021 - The United Nations in Iraq today commemorated the 18th anniversary of the 2003 terrorist attack on the UN offices in Baghdad in which 22 UN colleagues lost their lives. The ceremony held this morning at UNAMI Headquarters in Baghdad, at the UNAMI Regional Support Office in Erbil, and at the UNAMI offices in Kirkuk, Mosul and Basra also marks the observance of World Humanitarian Day designated by the General Assembly in 2008 to coincide with the date of the bombing in Baghdad. The Canal Hotel bombing (19 August 2003) was a massive loss for the United Nations and the humanitarian community, and marked a turning point for humanitarian operations in Iraq and worldwide. World Humanitarian Day also honours humanitarian aid workers who have been killed or injured during the course of their work. The ceremony also marked the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism.

Today and always, we remember our fallen colleagues.

Here is the text of the remarks by SRSR Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert at the Canal Hotel Bombing Commemoration - World Humanitarian Day - International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, held in Baghdad : “Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, friends,

we have gathered today in sombre commemoration of a tragic occasion. Eighteen years ago, on 19 August 2003, a massive explosion tore apart the UN headquarters in Baghdad. Twenty-two of our colleagues and friends were killed in this appalling attack. More than a hundred people were injured.

A number of survivors of the Canal Hotel bombing are here with us today. Despite the horrors of that day and the many catastrophes that have befallen Iraq since, these colleagues remain committed to playing a role in building a peaceful and stable future for their country. I salute their courage and resilience.

Although the attack on the Canal Hotel targeted the humanitarian community, ordinary Iraqis were not spared either: the attack was only a prelude to the terror that would engulf Iraq and claim countless victims in the following years. Today, we are therefore not only observing World Humanitarian Day, but are paying tribute to all victims of terrorism.

In Iraq, as well as in other parts of the globe, we continue to witness vicious threats and assaults against innocent civilians, humanitarian workers, healthcare professionals, civil society actors, the staff of international organisations; countless brave women and men who put themselves in considerable danger to assist individuals and communities affected by conflict and disasters. Those most vulnerable are often affected by more than one crisis, and are now also facing climate disasters and pandemics. Iraq is no exception to that. This World Humanitarian Day draws attention to the climate emergency that is wreaking havoc across the globe at a scale that is pushing the humanitarian community to its limits. The UN therefore calls on all governments to urgently tackle the most pressing environmental disasters that have exacerbated humanitarian crises and fuelled conflicts.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that I am honoured to be standing here with you today to remember the sacrifices of our twenty-two colleagues, fallen in the service of peace and stability in Iraq. We pay tribute to them, to everyone who lost their lives serving humanity, and to all victims of terror. May our continuing commitment to peace and justice be their legacy.

Colleagues,
Please join me in a minute of silence.”



Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano on World Humanitarian Day

Baghdad, 19 August 2021 - We once again commemorate World Humanitarian Day. This annual tribute honors all humanitarian aid workers who provide life-saving support and protection to those most in need, despite the odds.

This year, the theme of World Humanitarian Day is #TheHumanRace, drawing attention to the climate emergency, which is causing global damage on an unforeseen scale. We see firsthand in Iraq that extreme temperatures and water scarcity are impacting people's health and livelihoods, and we know that climate change is one of the largest risk factors for future humanitarian crises.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government over the coming year to assess how we can

collectively mitigate the impact of the climate emergency on vulnerable Iraqis, while we continue our ongoing work serving Iraqis in need of humanitarian assistance.



I also take the opportunity to memorialize today those United Nations staff who lost their lives during the attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad on 19 August 2003.



18 years ago, the world lost 22 humanitarian heroes in a bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad



New York, 20 August 2021 – Here are the United Nations Secretary-General's remarks at Wreath-Laying Ceremony for the Observance of the 18th anniversary of the bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad [as delivered]:

“Dear colleagues,

This memorial reminds us why August the 19th was chosen as World Humanitarian Day.

On this date 18 years ago, the world lost 22 humanitarian heroes in a bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad. These women and men were killed carrying out the noblest of all human missions — the mission of peace.

The mission of supporting innocent lives trapped by the violence, turmoil and instability of violent conflicts.

Humanitarian work is dangerous — with a tenfold increase in aid workers being shot, kidnapped or attacked over the last 20 years.

This year alone, 72 have lost their lives. Despite the risks, you can find aid workers from the United Nations and our humanitarian partners putting their lives on the line to deliver food, shelter and clean water. Medicine and vaccines. Protection, counselling and education.

You can find them in Afghanistan, supporting Afghans as they enter a

perilous new chapter in their country's history.

You can find them in Haiti, which suffered a devastating earthquake last week.

From Yemen and Syria — to Ethiopia, South Sudan, and beyond — humanitarian workers are staying and delivering.

They have no political agenda. They do not take sides. They are motivated only by the safety, human rights, dignity and wellbeing of the people trapped by these emergencies.

On this day and every day, I have one clear message to humanitarians everywhere: Thank you. You deserve our deepest gratitude, admiration and appreciation, always.

As a global community, let's honour humanitarians by re-committing to their safety and protection, no matter where they work.

And let's keep alive the flame of peace and hope in humanity that they hold in their hearts as they carry out their mission of peace in the most dangerous places on earth.

And I would like to ask all of you to join me in a moment of silence in memory of our heroes that have fallen in Baghdad and in so many other parts of the world.

Thank you.”