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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2576 \(2021\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since the previous report of 10 February 2022 ([S/2022/103](#)) and the briefing to the Security Council by the Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 24 February 2022.

II. Summary of key political developments

A. Political situation

2. The government formation process in Iraq remained at an impasse during the reporting period. On 1 March 2022, the Federal Supreme Court ruled that the decision made by the presidency of the Council of Representatives on 8 February to temporarily reopen presidential nominations was “invalid”. Nominations had been reopened after the Court suspended the candidacy of a Kurdistan Democratic Party candidate on 6 February (a suspension that was subsequently confirmed on 13 February) and because of a lack of quorum on 7 February, the session at which the Council of Representatives was scheduled to vote for a president. The Court ruled that presidential nominations could only be reopened by a decision of the Council of Representatives, and that its presidency was not authorized to take such a decision. Therefore, on 5 March, in place of a vote on a new President of the Republic, which the Council of Representatives had scheduled for that day, parliamentarians used the session to vote to reopen nominations. The presidential vote was subsequently scheduled for 26 March.

3. At a session of the Council of Ministers on 1 March, the Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, noted “the sensitive circumstances” that Iraq was going through and called upon political forces to form a “strong and effective government” that could provide services to the Iraqi people and support economic growth. On 6 March, at a meeting with education professionals, the President, Barham Salih, called upon all parties to adhere to the Constitution, noting the many tasks that a new parliament and



government would face and highlighting the urgent need to “establish good governance through [...] a new political and social contract”.

4. Meanwhile, political parties continued to hold consultations on the government formation process. On 27 February, the Office of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives reported that representatives of the Sadrist Bloc, the Al-Siyada Alliance (a Sunni grouping representing the Azm Alliance and the Taqaddum Alliance) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party had met in Baghdad. The Kurdistan Democratic Party stated that participants had discussed the latest political developments in Iraq, including their support for the presidential candidate of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The Office of the Speaker reported that the representatives had met again on 6 March.

5. On 10 March 2022, the office of the Sadrist Bloc leader, Muqtada al-Sadr, announced that he had called the leader of the Dawlat al-Qanun Coalition, Nouri al-Maliki. In addition, Mr. al-Sadr held separate telephone calls with the leaders of the Al-Siyada Alliance and the Kurdistan Democratic Party to “discuss some important issues related to the current Iraqi situation”. On 11 March, on social media, the President commended “the political initiative to overcome the state of constitutional obstruction”. He also highlighted his duty to “support national efforts to meet the constitutional requirements and initiate the formation of a capable government”. For his part, the Prime Minister issued a statement in which he noted that “national forces, parties and figures that have emerged from the democratic electoral process” must take responsibility for protecting “the national path” by “ending political gridlocks and forming a government that fulfils its obligations [...]”.

6. On 12 March, the media reported that Mr. al-Sadr had hosted a meeting with the leaders of the Al-Siyada Alliance and representatives of the Shia Political Coordination Framework. In a statement issued after the meeting, the leader of the Al-Siyada Alliance, Khamis al-Khanjar, thanked Mr. al-Sadr for his initiative, stressed the importance of national dialogue and expressed hope that the meeting would lead to the formation of a “strong government”. In a subsequent social media post, Mr. al-Sadr again called for a “national majority government”. On 13 March, the Coordination Framework stated that it had met to discuss the continuation of the political dialogue necessary to reach an understanding on the formation of “a government of national service” that would “preserve the rights of the largest social component and other respected components”.

7. On 23 March, the Sadrist Bloc announced the formation of the Homeland Salvation Alliance, composed of the Sadrist Bloc, the Al-Siyada Alliance and the Kurdistan Democratic Party. At a press conference in Baghdad, the Sadrist Bloc claimed that the Homeland Salvation Alliance was the “largest parliamentary bloc” and stated that the Alliance would “work to form a national majority government” that “prevails over the use of force”.

8. During a television interview on the same day, Nouri al-Maliki claimed that the Coordination Framework was the largest bloc, but would not go into government “without the second party”. He also predicted that a quorum would not be reached at the parliamentary session to elect a president. On 24 March, the Coordination Framework pledged to continue the dialogue with other parties to “unify [...] visions and achieve [...] understandings”.

9. On 26 March, the Council of Representatives held a session to elect the President of the Republic. However, the required quorum of two thirds (220 out of 329) was not reached. The Speaker therefore postponed the election until 30 March, and the parliamentary agenda was amended to allow the first reading of the draft law on emergency support for food security and development to take place. The second reading was held on 28 March.

10. On 30 March, the Council of Representatives again failed to vote for a new president, with the Speaker announcing that the necessary quorum had not been met. In a statement issued the same day, Mr. al-Maliki confirmed the position of the Coordination Framework and its allies as the “guarantor third” and reported that the Framework would soon release an “initiative paper” to suggest a solution to the situation. Mr. al-Sadr also released a statement the same day, in which he affirmed his rejection of a consensus-based government.

11. In a message released on 31 March, Mr. al-Sadr claimed that, based on its “unprecedented victory”, the Homeland Salvation Alliance had to be the “first to succeed in forming the largest [parliamentary] bloc” and argued that other alliances were obstructing the government formation efforts. He offered parties that he termed the “blocking third” the opportunity to negotiate the formation of a national majority government without the Sadrist Bloc, affording them a 40-day deadline to do so, starting on 3 April. His partners in the Homeland Salvation Alliance released a joint statement on 1 April, in which they expressed appreciation for his move and declared their adherence to the Alliance. They also expressed the hope that an understanding would be reached within the “Shia house” to accept the Sadrist Bloc candidate for Prime Minister and to agree on a government platform that would be supported by the main components.

12. For its part, the Coordination Framework formally announced its own initiative to address the political impasse on 1 April, which would be presented in detail during a dialogue with “the political forces”. In its statement, the Coordination Framework provided a summary of the initiative, including a commitment to constitutional provisions, the selection of the Prime Minister through a joint committee comprising the Coordination Framework and the Sadrist Bloc, and a broad agreement on the government programme, among other priorities.

13. Meanwhile, the business of government continued. During its session on 28 February, the Council of Representatives hosted the Minister of Finance, Ali Allawi, who had initially been called to appear on 19 February. The Minister explained the reasons for devaluing the Iraqi dinar in December 2020 and its impact on economic reforms. He noted that the devaluation had raised government revenues by 23 per cent and highlighted that Iraq had reduced its external debt by \$4 billion in 2021. He also explained that other factors had contributed to rising prices in the Iraqi market, such as a global increase in food prices since 2020. During the same session, the Speaker encouraged the parliamentary blocs to accelerate the formation of committees in the Council of Representatives.

14. On 2 March, the Federal Supreme Court ruled that the Prime Minister’s executive order of 27 August 2020 on the formation of a committee to investigate “corruption and important crimes” was “invalid” and ordered its immediate “cancellation”. The Court found that the order violated constitutional provisions relating to “human freedom and dignity”, the principle of separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary. In addition, it was stated in the ruling that the formation of the committee had interfered with the work of the Commission of Integrity, which had been formed as a constitutionally independent body to combat corruption. In a clarification issued on 7 March, the Court stated that combating corruption required “adherence to constitutional and legal rules, respect for the rule of law [and] support for all institutions authorized by the Constitution and the law”. In addition, the Court noted the need for political will and competent and impartial staff to counter corruption.

15. Amid rising commodity prices, food security was a concern for the Government. On 6 March, the Prime Minister chaired an emergency meeting of ministers and advisers to discuss ways to ensure food security, particularly in view of the conflict

in Ukraine. Ministers were instructed to secure strategic stocks of basic foodstuffs and the water quotas required for agricultural production. During a regular session on 8 March, the Council of Ministers approved measures to support vulnerable groups and mitigate the domestic impact of rising global prices. The National Security Council subsequently met to discuss the issue on 9 March. At that meeting, the Prime Minister directed the security services to take action to combat profiteering.

16. On 24 February, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, signed a decree establishing 1 October 2022 as the date for the region's sixth parliamentary elections and informing the relevant authorities, including the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Independent High Elections and Referendum Commission of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, of the need to initiate electoral preparations. On 27 February, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masrour Barzani, issued a decree in which the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and all relevant institutions were instructed to cooperate with the Independent High Elections and Referendum Commission of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, including by providing budgetary and other assistance necessary for the election.

B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

17. On 28 February 2022, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masrour Barzani, the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, Rewaz Fa'iq, and the President of the Judicial Council of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Abdul-Jabbar Aziz Hasan, met in Erbil to discuss the decision of the Federal Supreme Court of 15 February, in which the Court had ruled that the Oil and Gas Law (2007) of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq was unconstitutional. In a subsequent statement, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region and the President of the Judicial Council of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq declared that the Federal Supreme Court decision was "unacceptable" and, "indirectly, [...] an [...] amendment to the Constitution". They affirmed that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq would "exhaust all available legal means" to protect its constitutional powers and rights. They also stated that the Kurdistan Regional Government remained committed to resolving those issues with the federal Government in accordance with the Constitution.

18. On 3 March, at a press conference in Erbil, the Prime Minister, Masrour Barzani, reiterated the position of the Kurdistan Regional Government that the Court's ruling was a "political move" and a "gross violation of the Iraqi Constitution". He claimed that the Oil and Gas Law (2007) complied with the Constitution, expressing his view that "the management of oil and gas is not among the exclusive powers of the federal government" stipulated in article 110. He called for a revival of talks between Baghdad and Erbil on a revenue-sharing law.

19. On 11 April, the federal Ministry of Oil reported that a first meeting had been held in Baghdad between the Ministry and a delegation representing the Kurdistan Regional Government. Prior to that meeting, on 6 April, the Kurdistan Regional Government had reported that the delegations would discuss "strengthening coordination and cooperation in the oil and energy fields on the basis of the Constitution". At a press conference after the meeting, the federal Minister for Oil, Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar Ismail, stated that the Kurdish delegation had left to consult with the Kurdistan Regional Government "in order to launch another round of dialogues and discussions". For his part, the head of the delegation representing the Kurdistan Regional Government, Khaled Shwani, stated that mechanisms had been put forward to develop a plan to fully address the oil issue.

C. Security situation

20. Da'esh continued to conduct asymmetric attacks, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Babil, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. From 24 February to 2 April 2022, 69 attacks, mostly targeting security forces, were attributed to Da'esh. Iraqi security forces continued their counter-terrorism operations in response to Da'esh activity.

21. On 13 March, the Ministry of the Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that "at least 12 ballistic missiles" had targeted "civilians residency areas" located "around the new US Consulate compound in Erbil". According to the report, there was material damage, one civilian had been "lightly wounded" and an investigation had been opened. Later the same day, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of the Islamic Republic of Iran claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that it had "targeted" an Israeli "strategic centre" in Erbil with "precision-guided missiles". The attack was condemned by the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq, the President and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and other officials. The federal National Security Council stated that the attack that had "targeted the Iraqi city of Erbil" was an "attack on the principle of good neighbourliness between Iraq and Iran" and a violation of international laws and norms, and noted that the Council had requested "frank and clear explanations" from the Islamic Republic of Iran and was waiting for the "Iranian political leadership" to reject the "aggression". Also on 13 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran and informed him that the Government of Iraq protested against the attack. On 14 March, the Office of the Prime Minister announced that the Prime Minister had instructed that an investigative committee be formed, which would be placed under the Office of the National Security Adviser. On 15 March, the Council of Representatives also announced the formation of a parliamentary fact-finding committee to investigate the attack, which travelled to Erbil the same day. On 17 March, the Minister of the Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Rebar Ahmed Khalid, briefed the committee in Baghdad. According to a statement issued by the Council of Representatives, he had reported that there was no Israeli intelligence presence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and that the attack had targeted the home of a Kurdish businessman.

22. From 24 February to 2 April, 13 attacks were reported against trucks belonging to Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da'esh coalition, in Anbar, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Qadisiyah and Salah al-Din Governorates. No casualties were reported, and no claims of responsibility were made.

23. On 17 March, the Security Media Cell reported that four rockets had struck Balad airbase in Salah al-Din Governorate. No casualties or damage were reported, and no claims of responsibility were made.

24. On 6 April, the Security Media Cell reported that three rockets had landed in an area close to the Kawergosk oil refinery in Erbil Governorate. No casualties or damage were reported, and no claims of responsibility were made.

25. The Ministry of Defence of Turkey reported ongoing operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq during the reporting period.

D. Regional and international developments

26. Iraq continued to engage with the international community on a range of issues, including security, trade, energy, water resources and environmental challenges.

27. On 26 February 2022, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mohammed al-Halbousi, was received by the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in Istanbul. The Office of the Speaker reported that their discussions had focused on bilateral cooperation and coordination in all fields, including on economic and trade matters, facilitating visas for Iraqi citizens, and support for Iraqi efforts to combat terrorism. In addition, the Office of the Speaker reported that Mr. Erdoğan had affirmed support for Iraq and its “constitutional institutions”.

28. The Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, travelled to Jordan on 25 March, where he was received by King Abdullah II. As reported by the Office of the Prime Minister, the topics discussed had included bilateral relations, and “the global economic crisis and ways to confront its repercussions”. The Prime Minister also attended a meeting the same day with King Abdullah II, the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and the Minister of State of Saudi Arabia, Turki bin Mohammed Al Saud. The meeting was focused on “strengthening joint Arab action (...) in mitigating the effects of the economic crisis in the food security and energy sectors”, among other issues.

29. According to the Office of the Prime Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, spoke with his counterpart from the Syrian Arab Republic, Housain Alarnous, on 2 March, and they discussed ways of strengthening bilateral cooperation, including in the agricultural, industrial, service, economic, trade, energy and water sectors. On the same day, the Syrian presidency reported that the Chair of the Popular Mobilization Commission, Falih al-Fayyad, had been received by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Bashar Al-Assad. According to the Syrian presidency, they discussed bilateral cooperation, particularly in relation to border control and combating terrorist organizations in border areas.

30. The Prime Minister also spoke with the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Antony Blinken, on 13 March. According to the Office of the Prime Minister, they discussed bilateral, regional and international developments. Mr. Blinken also spoke with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government the same day. On 30 March, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq reported that he had received a letter from the President of the United States, Joseph Biden, in which Mr. Biden had “condemn[ed] the recent missile attack” and demonstrated “his administration’s continued commitment to the long-term stability of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region”.

31. On 27 February, the Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission, Viola von Cramon, presented the Mission’s final report at a press conference in Baghdad and met with the President, among other officials.

32. The Vice-President and Head of the Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, visited Baghdad on 1 and 2 March, meeting separately with the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq, the President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Fa’iq Zaidan, and the Head of the Martyrs Foundation of Iraq. Discussion topics included the strengthening of bilateral relations, including investment ties.

33. Between 6 and 9 March, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran and Iraq Affairs of the United States, Jennifer Gavito, visited Iraq. In Baghdad, she met separately with the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the National Security Adviser. Agenda items included ways to develop the cooperation between Baghdad and Washington, D.C., as well as the political situation in Iraq. She travelled to Erbil on 9 March, where she was received separately by the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Prime

Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The sides discussed, among other issues, bilateral cooperation and the importance of maintaining focus on the fight against Da'esh.

34. On 29 March, the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, Jean Asselborn, held separate meetings in Baghdad with the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq. In Erbil, on 30 March, he also met separately with the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Agenda items included the strengthening of bilateral relations and the political situation in Iraq and the region.

35. Between 5 and 7 March, the Ministry of Water Resources hosted the second Baghdad International Water Conference, with the theme “Water and climate change”, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme. The Minister of Planning, Khaled Battal al-Najm, representing the Prime Minister, delivered a speech in which he underlined the threats faced by Iraq, emphasized the importance of water management and called for regional coordination. He also reported on the formation of a committee to oversee the preparation of a “green paper” on national strategies to address climate change. Conference sessions covered issues relating to water management, climate change and water scarcity, and transboundary water. Recommendations published after the conference highlighted, among other issues, the need for integrated water resources management, cooperation at the water basin level, and ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

36. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq participated in the 157th regular session of the Council of the League of Arab States on 9 March. On the same day, he also held a tripartite meeting with his counterparts from Egypt and Jordan to review cooperation, coordination and integration in various fields. He also attended the forty-eighth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held in Islamabad on 22 March, and the Doha Forum, which took place on 26 and 27 March. In addition, he travelled to Moscow and Warsaw on 4 and 5 April as part of the Arab Ministerial Contact Group on the Crisis in Ukraine, a grouping formed by the Council of the League of Arab States.

37. Iraq also participated in the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), held in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the Iraqi delegation had held several bilateral meetings with participating countries to “coordinate positions”, and with UNEP officials to present measures adopted by Iraq to address environmental challenges, the “revitalization of Mesopotamia” and climate change. In addition, the Minister of Water Resources, among other officials, attended the ninth World Water Forum, held in Dakar from 21 to 26 March.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

38. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General continued to provide her good offices in the post-electoral dialogue, meeting with political party leaders and electoral stakeholders, including the leadership of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. She

emphasized the need for a sense of urgency and for all political actors to work towards the timely formation of a government to address the pressing challenges facing Iraq.

39. The Special Representative also continued to provide her good offices to the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments to resolve outstanding issues, stressing the importance of an institutionalized dialogue to reach mutually agreed solutions in a spirit of genuine cooperation.

40. In a statement, the Special Representative strongly condemned the attack in Erbil on 13 March, calling upon Iraqis to stand united against any act that violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

41. Following her visit to the Iraqi Marshes and the ancient city of Ur in February, the Special Representative stressed the importance of shared ownership across the political spectrum with regard to the present dangers of water scarcity. She described the salinization of water and soils, desertification and the disappearance of arable land as existential environmental concerns and outlined the associated risks, such as poverty, displacement, instability and potential for conflict.

42. Meanwhile, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance engaged with Iraqi stakeholders on the topic of the political participation of women and gender-based violence in the post-electoral phase. On 7 March 2022, she announced the release of a report containing a gender analysis of the 2021 elections. She remarked on the major achievement of Iraqi women candidates in gaining more parliamentary seats than required by the constitutional quota, demonstrating their ability to win on their own merit. She encouraged political parties to reflect that success in the next government by appointing women to senior positions.

43. Between 28 February and 2 March 2022, the Deputy Special Representative held a series of meetings in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah with political parties from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to discuss key issues and challenges related to the elections scheduled to be held in the region on 1 October 2022.

B. Electoral assistance

44. During the reporting period, UNAMI and the Independent High Electoral Commission focused their efforts on a review of the 2021 Council of Representatives elections to identify lessons learned and make recommendations to improve processes and capacities for future elections. In that context, from 27 to 30 March, UNAMI and the Commission jointly held a workshop on lessons learned in Sulaymaniyah, during which the outcomes of preparatory workshops on various electoral topics were presented, including recommendations for the further development of the Commission's capacity to plan and organize future electoral events. Participants in the workshop also examined good practices for promoting the participation of women in electoral processes, with both UNAMI and the Commission emphasizing the importance of collecting regularly updated gender- and sex-disaggregated data on voters, candidates and electoral officials.

45. On 23 March, UNAMI started holding monthly meetings with the Electoral Judicial Panel to reflect on the management of electoral complaints and appeals related to the 2021 Council of Representatives elections and to discuss recommendations to enhance existing systems with a view to resolving electoral disputes in Iraq.

46. Meanwhile, UNAMI facilitated focus groups from 28 February 2022 onward for the electoral office staff of the Independent High Electoral Commission in all 18 Governorates. The discussions were the first in a series of capacity development

activities to be conducted at the field level, with UNAMI support, on topics including the electoral legal framework, operations, logistics, training and procedures, election security, communications, public outreach, and engagement with electoral stakeholders.

47. The Mission, in coordination with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and UNDP, provided status updates to donors on the implementation of electoral assistance projects. The Mission and UNOPS prepared and shared with project donors the final report for the election monitoring and strategic communications component of the project on support for the 10 October elections. On 1 March, UNAMI and UNDP shared with donors the quarterly narrative report on the project on support for the electoral process of Iraq.

C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities

48. From 1 January to 31 March, UNAMI documented 49 incidents resulting in at least 69 civilian casualties (37 dead, including 11 boys and 2 girls, and 32 injured, including 6 boys, 3 girls and 2 women). More than half of the casualties resulted from unexploded ordnance attributed to unknown perpetrators. The remaining casualties were attributed mainly to Da'esh.

49. On 8 March, the Human Rights Committee concluded its review of the sixth periodic report of Iraq on its implementation of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. On 30 March, the Committee published the advance version of its concluding observations, expressing appreciation for its constructive dialogue with the high-level delegation of Iraq. The concluding observations covered positive steps taken by Iraq, including those that addressed the Committee's main concerns and recommendations on the implementation of the Covenant.

50. In March, UNAMI marked International Women's Day by organizing three strategic round-table discussions, which brought together 54 participants (31 women and 23 men), including government representatives from the environmental directorates, human rights defenders and civil society representatives from eight Governorates. The participants presented community-based initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality and the leadership role of women in mitigating the effects of climate change and identified advocacy options to strengthen and raise awareness to counter the impact of climate change.

51. To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March, UNAMI and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights hosted an event in Basrah that brought together 18 representatives (7 women and 11 men) from across the minority communities of Iraq, as well as Iraqis of African descent, representatives of minority human rights networks and civil society activists. Four Iraqi short films on minority rights were screened to frame a subsequent discussion.

52. From 6 to 8 March, UNAMI and the Office of Counter-Terrorism conducted training-of-trainers workshops with government officials, concluding the third phase of technical assistance to the Government of Iraq on the mainstreaming of human rights in counter-terrorism operations. An additional workshop was held on 9 and 10 March to promote compliance and human-rights-based approaches for law enforcement officials involved in counter-terrorism operations.

53. On 22 March, UNAMI and the Iraqi Network for Social Media concluded the implementation of their joint project on digital security and human rights with a round-table discussion attended by Iraqi authorities, private companies and civil society representatives. Data security, online protection, privacy and access to

information formed the basis for the discussion, and steps were outlined to strengthen rights in the online space, in particular freedom of expression.

54. The report on children and armed conflict in Iraq (S/2022/46) was discussed by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict of the Security Council on 1 March. In the report, details were provided on six grave violations against 253 children, which were verified during the period from August 2019 to June 2021, reflecting a significant decrease in violations against children.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

55. As at 1 March 2022, approximately 1.2 million people remained internally displaced in Iraq, including 175,029 persons hosted in 25 camps administered by the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and 4,677 people in 1 camp in Ninawa Governorate. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners engaged with key stakeholders to address funding shortfalls that had led to gaps in services in several camps towards the end of 2021. Funding was secured to bridge immediate service gaps until June 2022, while challenges remained for medium- to long-term scenario planning.

56. According to the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview carried out in preparation for the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan, the humanitarian situation in Iraq has improved considerably since the end of large-scale military operations against Da'esh in 2017. The Humanitarian Response Plan is used in parallel to the national plan on internal displacement of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework to find durable solutions for internally displaced persons and returnees. These mechanisms would be used to aid in developing the future stability and prosperity of Iraq, in cooperation with the Government and with stabilization and development actors.

57. Notwithstanding the improved situation, significant humanitarian needs remain. The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan, launched on 27 March 2022, is aimed at addressing the provision of live-saving services and programming to the most vulnerable internally displaced persons and returnees in nine conflict-affected Governorates in Iraq. Under the Plan, \$400 million is needed to meet the needs of 991,000 persons, with a particular focus on those who lack important civil documentation and those living in critical shelter.

58. Humanitarian funding has declined dramatically. In this light, the Humanitarian Coordinator has requested that either the Government of Iraq assume responsibility for the delivery of services where international funding is insufficient, with other services to be transitioned by December, or that it provide funding to the United Nations and its partners to allow for the continuation of the required humanitarian services. The Government has not yet responded. The donor community also supports more active financial engagement from the Government.

59. Meanwhile, the United Nations and its partners have continued to provide assistance to internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees in Iraq. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees finalized its provision of winter assistance in the form of cash. As at 6 March, more than 66,000 refugee and 45,000 internally displaced families had received the assistance. In response to a request from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement of Iraq to expand the Jeddah 1 camp in Ninawa Governorate to accommodate an additional 500 households from the Hawl camp by April, IOM initiated coordination activities to increase camp capacity. The Government of Iraq had cleared the return of 82 households from the Jeddah 1 camp to Anbar on 3 March, at which time the date for the returns remained to be confirmed. In parallel, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, IOM launched coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination campaigns in refugee camps

in Dahuk Governorate on 1 and 6 March and continued COVID-19 vaccination activities in Anbar, Baghdad, Dahuk, Erbil, Kirkuk and Ninawa Governorates.

60. The World Health Organization (WHO) continued to support the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As at 30 March, approximately 10.3 million people had been vaccinated against COVID-19, representing almost one quarter of the population. In addition, WHO continued to strengthen the health system and build national preparedness capacities to respond to potential public health risks. In response to the health needs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in early March, WHO had delivered 85 tons of life-saving medicines and medical supplies to be distributed to the health facilities.

61. Iraq was one of five countries prioritized to undertake the Universal Health and Preparedness Review. On 10 March, a high-level delegation from WHO concluded a five-day visit to Baghdad and Erbil to finalize the review process. The initiative was aimed at promoting more effective national and international cooperation to strengthen health security and response capacities.

62. On 27 February, IOM engaged with local authorities in Ninawa Governorate to discuss ways of expediting the issuance of birth certificates and proof of lineage. Representatives of the IOM legal programme successfully advocated the formation of committees through the Iraqi forensic medicine department that would travel to the various districts in Ninawa to support the verification processes related to the issuance of documentation. On 28 March, the Directorate of Civil Status, Passports and Residence of the Ministry of the Interior announced the formation of a committee to promote and issue national identification cards for displaced families, with priority granted to humanitarian cases and older persons.

63. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued to provide technical expertise and financial support to the Education Management Information System through the collection, analysis and utilization of quality information and data with a view to developing tailored policies and programmes. The System has been rolled out to a total of 6,137 schools (100 per cent) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The roll-out continues in other parts of Iraq.

64. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported the Ministry of Planning of Iraq to review and update the national population policy. Meanwhile, in March, in cooperation with the Folke Bernadotte Academy, UNFPA conducted training sessions for young people in multiple Governorates on youth, peace and security core principles and on the implementation of youth-led peace initiatives in their respective Governorates. In collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), three youth centres in Ninawa Governorate were rehabilitated in April 2022 to facilitate physical access of adolescents and youth with disabilities.

65. The Fund also engaged in April and May with the Kurdistan Regional Government to enhance the implementation of mandatory reporting on gender-based violence, in partnership with a local non-governmental organization. It had also inaugurated a one-stop assistance centre in Mosul for women who are survivors of gender-based violence in March.

66. The United Nations Children's Fund continued its efforts to establish climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene systems by strengthening climate resilience in health-care facilities and schools throughout Iraq, in coordination with WHO and partners in all Governorates. In Basrah, UNICEF, together with private sector partners, continued to implement ongoing activities to support the creation of "green jobs" for young people and to support the provision of clean energy in schools and of safe medical waste collection and disposal in health-care facilities.

67. The conflict in Ukraine had a severe impact on global supply chains during the reporting period, negatively affecting food prices and wheat imports and threatening food security in Iraq. In that regard, WFP noted a 16 per cent increase in the average price of vegetable oil in Iraq during the first two weeks of March, while the average price of wheat flour increased by 9 per cent at the national level during the same period. The year-on-year increase in the price of wheat flour was 26 per cent. The United Nations country team continued to monitor the situation and adapt its operational activities accordingly. From 28 February to 6 March, FAO provided feed supplement to 2,000 buffalo farmers in Karbala' and Najaf Governorates and 5,000 others in the Iraqi Marshes, improving the nutrition of their livestock following the increase in feed prices.

68. The resilience-building "Food Assistance for Assets" programme of WFP, launched in April 2021, continued to be implemented in Anbar, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. In partnership with the Government of Iraq and United Nations partners, WFP worked to support smallholder farmers by providing water access and water management using solar-powered technology and climate-smart agricultural techniques, including drip irrigation systems. During the reporting period, more than 100,000 people were supported directly and almost 290,000 people were supported indirectly through the Food Assistance for Assets programme. In parallel, FAO continued its efforts to enhance climate resilience among vulnerable households in rural communities, including by improving water use in agriculture by emphasizing irrigation system efficiency.

69. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNFPA and UNAMI, in partnership with the High Council for Women and Development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, celebrated International Women's Day with a ceremony on the theme "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow", held in the presence of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, government officials, diplomats and civil society representatives. The Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to combating violence against women and protecting women's rights as well as increasing women participation in leading positions.

70. The International Trade Centre initiated technical and advisory support for sector-specific trade strategies on 24 February and led workshops with the national committee on the accession of Iraq to the World Trade Organization from 6 to 16 March. Meanwhile, on 1 March, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development started a seven-year government-funded project to modernize and automate Iraqi customs services.

71. Under the "Revive the spirit of Mosul" initiative implemented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the rehabilitation of 100 heritage houses continued. In addition, the first UNESCO-supported "Mosul traditional music festival" was held from 24 to 27 March. Furthermore, 24 musicians from Mosul completed a comprehensive music-related training programme, and 20 students from Mosul received training in filmmaking.

72. On 1 March, UNESCO, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Iraq and Basrah Governorate, celebrated the graduation of 100 trainees (including two women) who had completed four-month training workshops on construction-related skills in Basrah.

73. In Baghdad, between February and April, UNESCO held four meetings with 14 senior members of the security forces together with the national safety committee to discuss freedom of movement for journalists. Participants agreed on the need for improved relations between police officers and journalists and for police officers to receive training on working with journalists.

74. During the reporting period, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to support Iraqi law enforcement agencies in capacity-building activities to address the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs. The Office also supported legislation to address the smuggling of migrants and worked on issues related to trafficking in persons. Moreover, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, UNODC initiated an assessment of juvenile reformatories to prevent and counter violent extremism affecting children and young people, under its Strive Juvenile project.

75. The Mine Action Service cleared 49,107 m² of explosive-ordnance-contaminated areas in Anbar and Ninawa Governorates to support the safe return of inhabitants and land development. In Basrah, 52,700 m² of legacy minefields from previous conflicts were cleared, with a national organization implementing the clearance for the first time under the Mine Action Service, to enable the safe return of inhabitants and promote agricultural activities. To promote sustainability within the government to clear explosive ordnance, the Mine Action Service trained 11 police officers as instructors in explosive ordnance disposal and improvised explosive device disposal, with the course ending on 24 February.

76. The United Nations country team continues to advocate a stronger sense of ownership on the part of the Government of Iraq in the provision of services to its citizens, such as social protection reform, and in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

IV. Security and operational issues

A. Update on security arrangements

77. The Department of Safety and Security monitored developments throughout Iraq and implemented risk management measures to enable United Nations operations. During the reporting period, the Department continued to carry out its monitoring activities, adjust security measures and contingency plans, liaise with host Government authorities and disseminate information and advisories to maintain personnel awareness of changes in the security environment.

78. The Department supported an average of 39 field missions per day across the country, all at risk levels assessed as medium or high. Close coordination with the host Government continued to ensure the necessary security support for United Nations operations, in particular movements and access authorizations to regions still affected by COVID-19 containment restrictions.

B. Mission facilities, logistics, aviation, financial and legal issues

79. In compliance with strict health and security protocols, the Mission carried out construction projects at UNAMI regional offices, the United Nations Guard Unit camp and the Forward Support Base in Baghdad.

80. The Mission continued to support the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the delivery of their mandates by providing office space, accommodation, and aviation and telecommunications services.

81. In collaboration with WHO and the Ministry of Health of Iraq, UNAMI continued its COVID-19 vaccination campaign for United Nations personnel and dependants in Iraq. As at 31 March, the Mission had administered 7,192 first and second doses of COVID-19 vaccines and 464 booster doses. In total, by 31 March,

95 per cent of UNAMI international staff and 93 per cent of UNAMI national staff had been vaccinated with a first and second dose.

V. Observations

82. The swift formation of a new government is essential to address the multiple challenges facing Iraq. It will be a critical first step to move towards delivering results-oriented reforms, thereby laying the foundation for a more sustainable future for all Iraqis.

83. I reiterate the urgent need for an institutionalized and regular dialogue between the federal and the Kurdistan Regional Governments leading to lasting, constitutionally based agreements on outstanding issues.

84. The missile attack in Erbil on 13 March and other recent attacks come at a critical political juncture for Iraq on its path to greater stability. I once again call upon all sides concerned to exercise restraint and avoid escalation. I also urge the country's partners to support its efforts to advance regional peace, stability and security, in accordance with the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighbourly relations.

85. Impunity for human rights violations, in particular in the context of demonstrations, remains a concern. I therefore strongly encourage further efforts to promote meaningful accountability, including by ensuring effective and transparent investigations and prosecutions to end impunity and to deliver justice for victims and their families.

86. It is important that gains and lessons of the parliamentary elections be utilized to continue to strengthen electoral institutions and processes. Hence, I welcome the efforts of the Independent High Electoral Commission to move forward with its post-election review process. I also welcome the continued support from Member States for ongoing electoral assistance activities, in particular the UNAMI-UNDP project entitled "Support to Iraq's electoral process: capacity development phase".

87. According to the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the humanitarian situation in Iraq has improved considerably since the end of large-scale military operations against Da'esh in 2017, but significant humanitarian needs remain. In this light, and considering the recovery of the economy of Iraq and current robust oil revenues, I encourage the Government of Iraq to step up its efforts in providing for the basic needs and protection of the Iraqi people, including those who have been reliant on international humanitarian support. I further encourage the authorities to expand their collaboration and ownership of the development cooperation and funding that will shore up the social contract between citizen and State for all Iraqis, in all parts of the country.

88. Given that Iraq is one of the five countries most severely affected by the climate crisis, the Government has prioritized the need to combat its ever-worsening effects. In the light of the particularly urgent challenges related to water scarcity and salinity, I urge all regional actors to constructively engage in earnest dialogue on the issue of water-sharing. I also call upon Member States to further support the Government's plan to prioritize climate action.

89. I commend the Government for its ongoing commitment to the repatriation of Iraqi families from the Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic but also emphasize the continuing need for further repatriations of the large number of Iraqis who remain there.

90. I share the Government's goal of ending displacement in Iraq. The United Nations stands by its commitment to support the Government in achieving a durable solution for all vulnerable displaced persons and returnees in Iraq, including by supporting social cohesion measures.

91. Lastly, I would like to thank my Special Representative, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the United Nations staff in Iraq for their continued dedication to implementing the Organization's mandate during extraordinary times and under challenging circumstances. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to my Deputy Special Representative, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, for her dedicated service to the United Nations in Iraq.
