UN Secretary-General in Iraq, praises progress in fighting ISIL, welcomes reform agenda and fight against corruption, urges national reconciliation and promises stabilization and humanitarian assistance

Baghdad, 26 March 2016 - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon paid a visit to Iraq on Saturday, 26 March 2016, along with Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group, and Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani, President of the Islamic Development Bank.

He was received by H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. At the Government Palace, the Secretary-General, Dr. Kim and Dr. Ali held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Haider Al Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq accompanied by other government ministers. In the afternoon, the Secretary-General, Dr. Kim and Dr. Ali each addressed a session of the Council of Representatives, chaired by the Speaker H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri.

Following discussions with his H.E. Mr. Fouad Masoum, President of the Republic of Iraq, the Secretary-General invited the President to participate in a meeting in April and sign on behalf of Iraq the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The Secretary-General, Dr. Kim and Dr. Ali later headed to the headquarters of the United Nations in Baghdad, where they laid a wreath and observed a minute of silence at the memorial for the fallen staff members.

The Secretary-General also travelled to Erbil, where he, Dr. Kim and Dr. Ali met H.E. Mr. Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and H.E. Mr. Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The Secretary-General congratulated Iraq on its steady victories against terrorism and lauded the heroism and sacrifices of the Iraqi security forces, the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga and the tribal forces and, on behalf of the international community, he pledged support in fighting ISIL. He also noted that military victories alone could not defeat the threat posed by ISIL to Iraq, the region and beyond. He stressed the importance of a political solution that would weaken support for ISIL and reinforce Iraq’s unity. In the light of the grave crimes committed by ISIL, the Secretary-General encouraged the authorities of Iraq to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The Secretary-General welcomed Prime Minister Al Abadi’s reform agenda to address institutional weaknesses, curb corruption, bureaucracy and wasteful spending, introduce needed economic reforms, transparency and accountability to address Iraq’s economic and fiscal crisis, and speed-up the devolution of powers to the local level to improve service delivery. These reforms should among others politically, economically and socially empower women and youth and bring about social cohesion. As in Baghdad, he pledged in Erbil support to the economic reform processes there.

He encouraged continued political dialogue to reach agreement on a single vision on national reconciliation, as well as activities to promote peace and stability in the post ISIL-era. He encouraged Prime Minister Al Abadi to continue efforts to overcome political polarization and divisions. He stressed that tangible solutions to prevent exclusion, inequality and injustice had to include amendments to or adoption of priority legislation, followed by their swift and full implementation.

He expressed appreciation for the enormous efforts made by Iraq to address the country’s humanitarian crisis and reconfirmed the UN’s commitment to help all Iraqis in need. He lauded the efforts underway to stabilize liberated areas that are required for the safe and voluntary return of displaced families to their homes. He added that it is critically important that civilians are allowed to move to safety and to live in dignity.

He acknowledged the significant remaining challenges in these areas, including massive destruction, widespread contamination of improvised explosive devices and the importance of community and tribal reconciliation, and reaffirmed the UN’s commitment to help in these areas.

The Secretary-General expressed strong support for the planned international conference on stabilization and reconstruction and stressed the importance of it being well coordinated and planned.

The Secretary-General encouraged the authorities of Iraq to take every possible step to achieve tangible progress concerning Kuwaiti missing persons and property.

In Erbil, he thanked for the generous support the Kurdistan Region has provided to Internally Displaced Persons and refugees. He pledged to assist the efforts of the Kurdistan Region’s Government to address the immense crisis and to mobilize international support.

The Secretary-General expressed hope for continued dialogue and cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil in the spirit of partnership, which was required to maintain the unity necessary to fight ISIL, address the economic and fiscal crisis, and implement political and economic reforms based on the principles of inclusiveness, democracy and law.
Secretary-General’s address to Iraq’s Council of Representatives

Baghdad, 26 March 2016

Honorable Speaker, Honorable Deputy Speakers and Members of the Council of Representatives, Excellencies, Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen,

Salaam Alekum, Shlom-kum ya eh-kawan wah ya eh-khwat? [Greetings. How are you, my brothers and sisters?] I am honoured to be here again in Iraq, the cradle of civilization, this time with Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank, and Dr. Ahmad Ali Al-Madani, President of the Islamic Development Bank.

Thank you for your warm welcome. I would like to start by offering my deepest condolences to all Iraqis, and particularly the families and friends of those killed in yesterday’s bomb attack at a football stadium in Iskanderiyeh, south of Baghdad.

The terrorists are sparing no one. They aim to strike at civilians everywhere and at any time, and to kill as many as possible. Yesterday it was spectators at a football game; a few weeks ago it was dozens of civilians waiting at a security checkpoint. They target funeral services and shopping malls. The international community stands with Iraqis in horror and outrage.

Excellencies, Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen,

This is my eighth visit to Iraq as Secretary-General of the United Nations. In the past ten years, I have seen Iraqis endure very difficult times. Young Iraqis have lived almost their whole lives under the shadow of conflict. This is a heartbreaking burden for them. We must all do our utmost to make sure the next generation can look forward to a brighter future.

Nearly twenty thousand civilians were killed from January 2014 to December 2015 alone. More than three million Iraqis are displaced from their homes, and ten million need urgent humanitarian aid. Violent extremists, who may have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide, have made disturbing advances that have deepened instability and insecurity.

Throughout these ten years, I have witnessed firsthand the indomitable spirit and resilience of the Iraqi people. The United Nations stands with Iraqis, every step of your journey towards peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, Distinguished Members of the Council of Representatives,

After the emergence of Daesh and the horrors unleashed across the north and west of Iraq, we are now seeing encouraging progress on the ground. Significant areas of Iraq, including Ramadi, have been liberated. The bravery of the Iraqi Security Forces, Peshmerga, Popular Mobilization Forces and tribal fighters is admirable. Daesh is losing its appeal to Iraq’s communities.

Many Iraqis, both combatants and civilians, have made great sacrifices and suffered tragic losses to reach this point. I express my sincere condolences to their families, friends and colleagues.

I also pay tribute to this Parliament for your part in stabilizing Iraq and building peace for the future. In the year since my last visit, you have endorsed the important budget law for 2016 and other important legislation.

Despite the gains that have been made, Iraqis continue to face extreme challenges. Daesh is a determined adversary that adapts its strategy to cause maximum damage and terror. The recent appalling attacks at funerals, markets and places of worship in Baghdad, Muqdadiya and Sadr City were clearly aimed at undermining the unity of the Iraqi people.

Mr. Speaker, Distinguished parliamentarians, Daesh will not be defeated by military means alone. It gained strength by exploiting divisions and grievances and by appealing to people who felt marginalized and disenfranchised.

Iraqis can only win the fight against Daesh by addressing these issues at their roots.

First, I call on all political leaders here today to continue your efforts towards a single, unified vision to advance national reconciliation in Iraq. This vision must be based on unity, compromise and meeting the aspirations of all the Iraqi people. It should include women leaders, youth, minority groups, representatives of all communities. It will encompass key legislative reforms, including the Justice and Accountability law, the proposed General Amnesty Law and the establishment of the National Guard.

This spirit of compromise must extend to making sure that the executive and legislative branches, including the parliamentary blocs, work closely together to support the Prime Minister, as he implements the needed reforms to address the multiple crises you face.

Second, I urge you to base your response to Daesh, and all other security operations, firmly on international law, particularly human rights and humanitarian law. There are continued reports of arbitrary arrests, killings and destruction of property in liberated areas,
Secretary-General’s address to Iraq’s Council of Representatives

and of attempts to prevent displaced people, including ethnic and religious minorities, from returning home. I am encouraged that the Prime Minister has expressed his concern and is taking action.

Third, the fight against Daesh has taken resources away from services including education and healthcare. They can no longer wait. Addressing human development needs is fundamental to Iraq’s peace and security. Economic reforms, anti-corruption measures and the diversification of the economy will help generate employment, initiate investment projects and deliver services which are vital to Iraq’s stability. President Kim and I are here to assure you of the international community’s support for these programmes. The United Nations and the World Bank are your partners on this journey.

Fourth, I urge you to focus your efforts on restoring state and local authority, rule of law, good governance and the provision of services to areas liberated from Daesh as quickly as possible.

This is the best way to make sure those displaced by conflict, including minority and ethnic communities, return voluntarily and peacefully, to fulfil your plan for up to 900,000 people to return to their home communities this year. The United Nations provided help to stabilize Tikrit and Al Dour, and is helping to lay the conditions for the voluntary return of hundreds of thousands of people in areas newly liberated from Daesh. The United Nations is providing humanitarian support to millions of Iraqis every month, and has offered technical support to clear mines and other explosives. We will continue all this work, under the leadership of the Iraqi government.

Fifth, I call on you all to continue your dialogue and partnership on these key issues with your counterparts around the country and particularly in the Kurdistan Region. I will stress this when I visit Erbil later today.

Baghdad and Erbil must follow up your successful joint security efforts against Daesh with dialogue on economic cooperation, energy and revenue sharing. These five key points are included in the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism that I presented to the United Nations General Assembly earlier this year.

The plan takes a practical and comprehensive approach to address the drivers of violent extremism. It puts forward more than 70 recommendations for concerted action at the global, regional and national levels.

I urge Iraqis to become leaders in the global partnership against this scourge.

Mr Speaker, Distinguished parliamentarians, No country could face these immense challenges alone. I call on Iraq’s neighbours, regional partners and the wider international community to lend their full support to Iraq’s fight against Daesh and to its reconstruction and stabilization work.

I urge all Iraqis to share your wonderful country with each other, for the good of all. I ask every Iraqi – and particularly you, the elected representatives of the Iraqi people – to take responsibility for the future of your country, and to end the nepotism and corruption that can only lead to further years of misery.

I give you my personal assurance that I will continue to work for the peace, stability and prosperity of Iraq until my last day in office at the end of this year. Iraqis have truly seen the worst of times.

I hope and believe that with the support of the United Nations and the international community, you will also see the best of times. Iraq must fulfil its promise to become an economic and cultural powerhouse at the heart of this region.

Despite your current challenges, the future belongs to the resilient, hard-working, warm-hearted Iraqi people. I am confident that they will recover and triumph – In sh-Allah.

Shukran Jazeelan.
As-salaam ‘alaykum
Good afternoon.
Great pleasure for me to visit Iraq again, I am pleased to be back in Baghdad for my eighth visit as Secretary-General and I am very much impressed by all the progress you have been making, particularly against Daesh.
Before I go on to specific issues, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to the people and Government of Iraq, and particularly those members of the families affected by terrorist attacks yesterday in Iskanderiyeh, south of Baghdad. They were [targeting] just civilian people who were enjoying sports, in a football stadium. That means these terrorists don’t care where and when and whom. This is totally unacceptable and should be defeated in the name of humanity. And I really appreciate Iraqi Government and people, their continuing commitment under the leadership of their Prime Minister, to fight against extremism and terrorism.
Ladies and gentlemen,
We have just held constructive talks with His Excellency Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and His Excellency the Foreign Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari and with distinguished Ministers, on the security, political, economic and social reforms, as well as humanitarian and human rights situation in Iraq. I am also very much happy to be joined by Dr. Jim Yong Kim, World Bank Group President, and also Dr. Ali of the Islamic Development Bank. This is a joint and combined demonstration of our support for the noble efforts, sometimes very difficult efforts of the Iraqi Government in first of all securing peace and stability through national reconciliation and socio-economic reforms, through inclusive dialogue.
I sincerely hope that our visit will continue to generate the strong support from the international.
I congratulate the Iraqi security forces, the Peshmerga, the popular mobilization forces and the sons of tribes for their recent advances, and I wish them success in the operations to liberate Mosul, Fallujah and other parts of the country.
I salute the Iraqi people for their sacrifices, patience and resilience in the face of Daesh’s murderous campaign, and I offer them my sincere condolences again for the countless lives lost.
I reiterate my call on Iraq’s regional and international partners to lend their support to the Government and people of Iraq in this fight. This support must be provided in full coordination and consultation with the Government of Iraq and with respect for the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. I remain extremely concerned about the enormous challenges Iraq faces.
Daesh has subjected all Iraqis, but particularly minority communities, to murder, abduction, rape and other sexual violence. By destroying and looting property and places of religious and cultural significance, Daesh are attempting to eradicate the identity and unity of Iraq and its people. Some 3,500 women, mainly Yezidi, remain enslaved and subjected to horrific violations on a daily basis. Ten million people require some form of humanitarian assistance and 3.3 million are internally displaced. Iraq is among the most deadly countries in the world for civilians. Last year, more than 7,500 people were killed in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict. These challenges can only be met by tackling the root causes of conflict, ensuring justice and equality for all in an inclusive state based on democracy, the supremacy of the law and human rights.
I appeal to all friends of Iraq to continue their support for stabilization, reconciliation, reconstruction and de-mining work, and to the Government to accelerate efforts to restore the rule of law, including state control over security and weapons. This will allow the safe and voluntary return of displaced people to their homes.
National reconciliation is an important part of the strategy to defeat Daesh, who have ruthlessly exploited divisions and targeted the marginalized and disenfranchised. Iraq’s political, civil society, community and tribal leaders and representatives must work together towards inclusive peace and prosperity. Iraq also faces enormous economic challenges, including the falling price of oil, inefficiencies and corruption. The international community is ready to offer more support, but Iraqis themselves must implement reforms that will put their country on the road to recovery. These reforms must include measures to empower women and young people, and to bring [about] greater social cohesion.
The United Nations remains steadfast in its support to the Government and people of Iraq. And I count on Prime Minister al-Abadi’s leadership.
Shukran.
Question on the support given to Iraq by the United Nations.
Secretary-General: About your question related to the United Nations, how the United Nations and the international community support Iraq in their fight against Daesh, terrorism, and also how we can help politically in the area of security and economic and social development, if I may just say that in principle, the United Nations is working very closely with Member States to counter terrorism and extremism in close coordination with Member States. In that regard, I welcome the coalition who has been fighting ISIL in Syria and in Iraq and I hope that they will continue to provide such support. I have been saying that military operations may be effective, may be necessary and should be there, but from the beginning, in principle, we need to invest more in preventing this extremism and terrorism, [in understanding] why these young people join these young terrorist group fighters.
I have proposed some recommendations to the General Assembly and those recommendations have been unanimously adopted by the General Assembly. I am asking the Member States of the United Nations to consider, examine and apply whichever recommendations they find useful for their own countries. There are about 70 recommendations covering all spectrum of extremism and terrorism, starting from political economic, social and other means, [including] military means. Therefore, we sincerely hope that this will be the basis of our common efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and extremism. For that, if I may ask the Member States, each and every Member States: I think their leadership should show good governance and provide socio-economic opportunities for young people and women, who otherwise could be disillusioned and frustrated. Then, they can easily become prey and easily fall trap to the ideologies of extremism and terrorism. Anti-corruption and preventing inequalities and injustice and impunity [is essential], so these societies should be seen by the people as fair and harmonious. Therefore, it will be very important that leaders of every country should lead by example.
At the same time, we should provide the necessary assistance, financial and technical support to those countries who need capacity-building. This is what the United Nations is doing. Even though we have limited resources, we are inviting security-related people, intelligence-related people, to try to build the capacity of the countries [that need it].
It should be a comprehensive approach covering all spectrum of our life.
In Baghdad, UN chief underlines extreme concern about 'enormous' challenges Iraq faces

Baghdad, 26 March 2016 – Visiting Iraq today for the eighth time as United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon said he is impressed by the progress made, particularly against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or Da'esh, but warned that he remains extremely concerned about the enormous challenges the country faces.

“National reconciliation is an important part of the strategy to defeat Da'esh, who have ruthlessly exploited divisions and targeted the marginalized and disenfranchised,” Mr. Ban said at a press conference following a meeting with Iraq’s Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and other government representatives. “We have just held constructive talks [..] on the security, political, economic and social reforms, as well as humanitarian and human rights situation in Iraq,” he indicated.

The UN estimates that ten million people require some form of humanitarian assistance and 3.3 million are internally displaced. Iraq is also among the most deadly countries in the world for civilians; last year, more than 7,500 people were killed in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict.

Joined by the presidents of the World Bank Group and of the Islamic Development Bank, the UN chief said their visit is a joint and combined demonstration of their support for the “noble” and at times difficult efforts of the Iraqi Government in securing peace and stability through national reconciliation and socio-economic reforms.

“I reiterate my call on Iraq’s regional and international partners to lend their support to the Government and people of Iraq in this fight. This support must be provided in full coordination and consultation with the Government of Iraq and with respect for the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” he added.

Mr. Ban saluted the Iraqi people for their sacrifices, patience and resilience in the face of Da'esh’s “murderous campaign,” and offered them his sincere condolences for the “countless lives lost.” Yesterday, a terrorist attack in Iskanderiyeh, south of Baghdad, targeted civilians who were playing in a football stadium.

“That means these terrorists don’t care where and when and whom. This is totally unacceptable and should be defeated in the name of humanity,” he warned, adding that Da'esh has subjected all Iraqis, but particularly minority communities, to murder, abduction, rape and other sexual violence.

“By destroying and looting property and places of religious and cultural significance, Da'esh are attempting to eradicate the identity and unity of Iraq and its people. Some 3,500 women, mainly Yezidi, remain enslaved and subjected to horrific violations on a daily basis,” he reported.

Underlining that Iraq also faces enormous economic challenges—including the falling price of oil, inefficiencies and corruption—Mr. Ban stated that the international community is ready to offer more support, but Iraqis themselves must implement reforms that will put their country on the road to recovery. “These reforms must include measures to empower women and young people, and to bring [about] greater social cohesion,” he insisted.

Meanwhile, in an address to Iraq's Council of Representatives, the Secretary-General highlighted how significant areas, including Ramadi, have been liberated from the terrorist group. “The bravery of the Iraqi Security Forces, Peshmerga, Popular Mobilization Forces and tribal fighters is admirable. Da'esh is losing its appeal to Iraq's communities,” he declared.

Mr. Ban also paid tribute to the Parliament for their part in stabilizing Iraq and building peace for the future. “In the year since my last visit, you have endorsed the important budget law for 2016 and other important legislation,” he said.

He called on the political leaders to continue their efforts towards a single, unified vision to advance national reconciliation, and urged them to base their response to Da'esh, and all other security operations, firmly on international law, particularly human rights and humanitarian law.

He also reminded the Members of the Council that the United Nations and the World Bank are their partners in addressing human development needs, including healthcare and education.

In a separate meeting with the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Massoud Barzani, and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, the UN chief expressed his appreciation for the generous support that the Kurdistan Regional Government has provided to more than one million displaced Iraqis, and to the several hundred thousand refugees from Syria.

He called on the Kurdistan Regional Government “to do everything possible to ensure the safety and dignity of civilians caught in conflict, and to encourage the voluntary and safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes while preventing the rise of intercommunal tensions in liberated areas.”

UN News Centre
Adapting SDGs to the Iraqi context introduced to development and planning officials

Istanbul, 5 February 2016 – As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has come into effect on 1 January 2016, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a capacity building workshop for 28 Iraqi officials, titled Good Governance and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), the workshop was held in Istanbul over the period of 31 January to 5 February. Targeted were Iraq’s Higher Committee for Sustainable Development, currently working on planning, implementation and follow-up of the post 2015 Agenda in Iraq, as well as the National Center for Management Development and Information Technology of the Ministry of Planning. Support was provided to trainees on adapting the Agenda to the national context, and devising an effective communications strategy for SDGs.

Chairman of the Higher Committee for Sustainable Development, Mr. Maher Johan, noted the workshop as “an opportunity to build a deeper understanding of the sustainable development agenda, good governance, and communication approaches for the public administration.” He added: “Given its participatory approach, the workshop is expected to bring tangible results to the Ministry of Planning.”

“The workshop’s added value resides in helping to make the global SDGs relevant to Iraq’s changing national realities,” commented Mrs. Asya el Meehy, a participant who works as Governance and Public Administration Officer. In turn, UNDP Iraq’s Public Sector Modernization (1-PSM) Programme Manager, Mr. Hisham El Azzouni, said: “The SDGs are important for determining the future direction of development work over the coming 15 years. They will influence government planning and donor funding priorities, and will have a direct impact on people’s lives. In this context, UNDP will continue to provide the necessary support to the Government of Iraq.”

The workshop is a joint UNDP and ESCWA initiative under I-PSM joint programme activities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which has been supporting the public sector reform agenda in Iraq.

National Strategic Urban Development Framework discussed

Baghdad, 01 March 2016 - A high-level capacity building workshop took place in Erbil Iraq, on 29 February and 1 March, 2016. Over 60 participants from all the Iraqi governorates and from the Ministry of Planning were represented.

The workshop aimed to define a strategic approach to addressing urban resilience and economic development for governorate planning and strategies, as well as outlining the process for developing the National Strategic Spatial Development Framework for National and Governorate levels. The Framework will be entitled: “Achieving Sustainable urban development through resilience and economic development in Iraq”, and is expected to contribute to a balanced urban development throughout the country.

In line with the global ‘New Urban Agenda’, governorate strategies will promote contemporary approaches and methodologies that encourage planned and balanced development of urban areas through planned city expansion, the notion of ‘thinking strategic but acting locally’, as well as the key role that governorates play in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) by embracing sustainable urbanization.

UN-Habitat also emphasized the need for governorates to strengthening their respective institutional arrangements and execute governorate budget so as to ensure effective delivery of services and infrastructure to the citizens of Iraq, which will also meet the aims of the world global ‘Urban Agenda’ within the context of Habitat III.

One of the sessions focused on the online Data Management Platform created by UNHabitat to introduce a new level of participatory planning among decision-makers and technical staff. The Platform is easily accessible by the Ministry and all governorates’ staff.

An official from Basra governorate showcased how data can be uploaded onto the platform, and how data can be shared between the national and governorate levels as well as between governorates.

This work is part of a three years Local Area Development Programme (LADP-2015-2018), jointly implemented by UNDP & UN-Habitat and funded by the European Union.

The programme aims to improve capacity for urban planning and implementation across governorates in Iraq, resulting in higher budget execution and efficient service delivery.

The programme also seeks to encourage efficient communication and coordination between central and governorate levels as well as pave the way for the adoption of participatory approaches in local planning and development.
Japan gives USD 15 million to UN-Habitat projects in Iraq

Baghdad, 03 March 2016 - United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has received USD 15 million from the Government of Japan to implement two projects in Iraq: “Gender-sensitive Durable Shelter Support for Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq” and “Promoting Urban Recovery in Newly Liberated Areas in Iraq.”

The conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has had profound humanitarian consequences throughout Iraq. More than three million Iraqis have fled their homes and three million more are living under ISIL control. Some of the major cities in Iraq already have more number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) than their original population, putting communities hosting IDPs under severe pressure. Inadequate and insecure shelter conditions endanger women and girls, making them increasingly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. Even after liberation of cities once controlled by ISIL, only small portions of IDPs have returned, because cities are devastated with buildings and houses burned, shops looted, roads damaged from bombs and electricity grid destructed, after going through major military operations. Despite the efforts of the Government of Iraq in providing support to IDPs and returnees, the severe budget crises because of the decline in the oil prices and the cost of the war against ISIL necessitate the mobilization of substantial humanitarian support.

Under the project titled “Gender-sensitive Durable Shelter Support for IDPs in Iraq” (USD 9,500,000), UN-Habitat, with the funding from the Government of Japan, aims to provide dignified and durable solution to protracted humanitarian crisis through establishment of gender-sensitive IDP shelter sites equipped with durable prefabricated shelters as well as basic infrastructure and public facilities. Building on the success of the durable IDP shelter sites constructed by UN-Habitat in nine sites across Iraq, the project will also develop capacity of the targeted governorates and line ministries to respond to shelter needs of IDPs in a gender-sensitive manner.

The Government of Japan also supports the mobilization of substantial humanitarian support.

UN-Habitat to tackle the crisis in Iraq from a different angle, aiming to promote urban recovery of newly liberated areas and in targeted areas in Iraq and facilitate returns under the project titled “Promoting Urban Recovery in Newly Liberated Areas in Iraq” (USD 5,500,000). The project expects to enhance self-reliance of and mutual assistance in the affected communities by (i) improving living conditions and gender sensitivity in communities in newly liberated areas through self-repair and reconstruction of housing units as well as installment, operation and maintenance of basic community infrastructure; and (ii) supporting and developing capacity of community members to effectively operate and maintain housing units and basic community infrastructure.

Country Programme Action Plan between the Government of Iraq and UNFPA signed


Building on UNFPA’s work in Iraq from the past years, the new CPAP, will allow UNFPA to support the Iraqi government in its mandated areas, including; enhancing access and services for Sexual and Reproductive Health for women and girls; addressing Women’s Empowerment including programmes on response to Gender based violence; and youth and population dynamics.


During the occasion of the signature of the CPAP, the UNFPA Representative also acknowledged the continued support from the Ministry of Planning and from other line ministries including Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Youth to the UNFPA programme in Iraq.
Qoratu Camp, 03 March 2016 - Sama lives in Qoratu camp for internally displaced people in Sulaymaniyah governorate, situated just 25 kilometers from the Iranian border. He’s one of several volunteers working daily in the camp, ensuring that families stay healthy by reducing the risk from water-borne diseases. Since the camp opened it’s become home to nearly 500 families who fled conflict in Anbar. At the moment many of the camp’s residents have their water trucked in, but with generous support from the Government of Japan, boreholes are being drilled and water tanks installed—a much more sustainable option. Qoratu is one of three camps in the area where UNICEF is overseeing the construction of high-quality water infrastructure with Japanese support. Volunteers such as Sama also help educate families on how to reduce disease through appropriate sanitation and hygiene. A volunteer committee meets weekly to assess the latest threats and the best way to counter them—crucial in a crowded camp setting in a cholera-endemic country facing a protracted security crisis.

A couple of hours drive north of Qoratu, Ashti camp is transforming into the largest camp for displaced people in the country. There are about 7,000 residents here, but when it’s finished it will be home to up to 17,000 people. When the borehole is complete and the camp is full, families will have an ample supply of safe water and volunteers such as Sama will continue to ensure that families are protected from disease.

“When I started, most families did not have the information to stay clean in this new camp environment, but now people have changed their behaviour,” he says. “Last year there was no cholera in the camps and very few cases of water borne diseases.”

Thanks to the work of Sama and others like him, it is likely to stay that way.

By Chris Niles, Consultant, UNICEF

New contribution from Australia will help thousands to restart their lives in ISIL-free areas

Baghdad, 8 March 2016– The Government of Australia has contributed US$1.4 million to UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS), which finances fast-track initiatives in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The contribution will help thousands of people as they try to restart their lives in Ramadi and Sinjar where the Iraqi Government has recently retaken control.

UNDP’s stabilization facility channels support to help rehabilitate civic infrastructure, kick-start local economies, boost government capacity and promote community reconciliation to allow displaced populations to return home.

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande thanked Australia for its generosity. “So much needs to be done in the areas liberated from ISIL. The level of destruction in Ramadi and Sinjar is some of the worst in the entire country; it is truly shocking,” said Ms. Grande. “Australia’s support will help improve conditions for families who are desperate to return to their homes and rebuild their lives.”

Ambassador Mr. Christopher Langman said, “Australia is pleased to support stabilization efforts in newly liberated areas through this project. This funding will assist in restoring essential services and stimulating the local economy, helping returning Iraqis to find work opportunities and reestablish themselves. This contribution is part of Australia’s AUD45 million of support since 2014 to populations affected by the conflict in Iraq.”

UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization is working in liberated areas of Salah al-Din, Diyala and Nineveh Governorates. Stabilization efforts in Ramadi in Anbar Governorate will start as soon as the areas is cleared of booby-traps, mines and unexploded ordinance.
FAO: Iraq Agriculture and livelihoods needs assessment

Baghdad, March 2016 - Out of a total population of approximately 32 million, about 5 million Iraqis are involved in the agricultural sector and about one third of the population live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture related activities for their livelihoods.

The assessment was carried out in five (sub-) districts in Salahadin governorate three districts in Nineawa; and three in Kirkuk. The overall importance of restoring agricultural activities and livelihoods across these areas is unquestionable – not only for the communities in these regions, but for Iraq as a whole.

The invasions of these governorates by ISIS mainly occurred in the period June to August 2014. Some of Salahadin was liberated in April 2015, some gates just recently and some areas are still occupied. In Ninewa, the relevant districts were invaded in August 2014 and some parts liberated in the period June to November 2015. Large areas of Kirkuk were liberated in August 2015.


Achieving sustainable urban development through resilience and economic development in Iraq

Erbil, 10 March 2016 – UN-Habitat recently organized a high-level capacity building workshop with over 60 participants from Iraqi governorates and the Ministry of Planning representatives under the Local Area Development Programme (LADP) jointly implemented by UNDP and UN-Habitat, funded by the European Union. The workshop was held in Erbil, Iraq to discuss the National Strategic Urban Development Framework within the context of the New Urban Agenda.

The workshop set out to define a strategic approach to addressing urban resilience and economic development at the governorate level, as well as outlining the process for developing the National Strategic Spatial Development Framework for National and Governorate levels. The Framework will be entitled: “Achieving Sustainable urban development through resilience and economic development in Iraq”, and is expected to contribute to a balanced urban development throughout the country.

At the opening of the workshop, Erfan Ail, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq Programme, outlined the importance of a participatory approach in developing the National Spatial Development Framework for Iraq that embraces the ‘New Urban Agenda’ within the context of Habitat III on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development.

Mohammed Sayed, Director General of the Ministry of Planning Iraq also echoed the need for governorates to develop their respective urban strategies in an inclusive and participatory manner.

Achieving sustainable urban development through resilience and economic development in Iraq!Thinking strategically, acting locally

Through a series of presentations and interactive discussions in line with the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat introduced contemporary approaches and methodologies that encourage planned and balanced development of urban areas through planned city expansion, the notion of ‘thinking strategic but acting locally’, as well as the key role that governorates play in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by embracing sustainable urbanization.

UN-Habitat also emphasized the need for governorates to strengthening their respective institutional arrangements and execute governorate budget so as to ensure effective delivery of services and infrastructure to the citizens of Iraq.

One of the sessions focused on an online Data Management Platform created by UN-Habitat to introduce a new level of participatory planning among decision-makers and technical staff. The Platform is easily accessible by the Ministry and all governorates’ staff.

An official from Basra governorate showcased how data can be uploaded onto the platform, and how data can be shared between the national and governorate levels as well as between governorates. The platform also enables for systematic assessment data from both National and governorate levels resulting in developing a credible National Spatial Development Framework for Iraq.

The three years Local Area Development Programme (2015-2018) aims to improve capacity for urban planning and implementation across governorates in Iraq, resulting in higher budget execution and efficient service delivery. The programme also seeks to encourage efficient communication and coordination between central and governorate levels as well as pave the way for the adoption of participatory approaches in local planning and development.
Ramadi, 22 March 2016 – The Governor of Anbar, Mr. Sohaib al-Rawi, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, visited Ramadi today to assess conditions and provide urgently needed support to families returning to their homes.

The delegation met with security forces and representatives of the local government and police to discuss the scope and density of IED (improvised explosive devices) contamination. Early assessments confirm that infestation is widespread; roads, commercial buildings, houses and public spaces are infested, putting civilians trying to return at grave risk. Experts are estimating that Ramadi could be one of the worst infested cities in the world. Officials confirmed to the delegation that 48 civilians, including IED clearance personnel, have been killed and 83 wounded by IEDs.

“It is a tragedy that people are dying and injured because of booby-traps. Removing these terrible devises is a top priority. The reality is that many, if not most neighborhoods in Ramadi aren’t yet safe”, said Ms. Grande. “People have already suffered so much and they are impatient to go home. This is completely understandable. IED clearance is time-consuming and it’s difficult, but it’s essential to ensure that people are safe”.

The Anbar Government and FFIS are starting stabilization work in al-Saidiqiya and al-Matheeq neighbourhoods. A number of priority activities are expected to start in areas as soon as they are declared free of IEDs. Under a plan agreed with the Anbar Government, FFIS will repair water systems, provide cash grants to businesses, rehabilitate health facilities and public buildings and employ hundreds of young people on work brigades. Five generators have been already installed to help restart the electrical grid and three more were delivered today by the delegation.

“The Anbar Government has actively assisted the return of more than 630 families to al-Saidiqiya and another 250 to al-Matheeq in Ramadi district. We need to provide urgent assistance to help these families rebuild their lives”, said Governor al-Rawi. “We honour those who have lost their lives in the liberation of Anbar. I thank the Iraqi Security Forces, particularly the Anbar police, for their commitment to removing IEDs. We need help from the international community to accelerate this. Making sure that people come home in safety and dignity is our collective responsibility”.

UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) works in areas newly liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Based on priorities identified by local authorities, UNDP helps to quickly repair public infrastructure, provides grants to small businesses, promotes civil engagement and community reconciliation and provides short-term employment through public works schemes.
UNDP and Japan partner to support stabilization and resilience in Iraq

Baghdad, 28 March 2016 – The Government of Japan is providing US$23.5 million to support the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its work to help stabilize and build resilience in Iraq. Japan’s contribution will be channeled through UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) and through UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP).

UNDP’s stabilization facility channels fast-track support to liberated areas to help rehabilitate civic infrastructure, kick-start local economies, boost government capacity and promote community reconciliation. UNDP’s resilience programme channels support to areas where social tensions are high and where communities are struggling to deal with the impact of the crisis. The focus of both programmes is on helping families to rebuild their lives after the devastation caused by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

During a signing ceremony held today in Baghdad, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, said: “People have suffered so much. One of the most important things the international community can do in Iraq is to help families return safely and in dignity to newly liberated areas. Japan is a leading, and very generous donor and its contribution will give hundreds of thousands of Iraqis hope for their future.”

“It is my great pleasure to announce Japan’s contribution of $23.5 million to UNDP,” H.E. Mr. Fumio Iwai, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq said. “This includes $16 million to FFIS,” he continued. “With this contribution, Japan is privileged to become one of the top donors to FFIS, and I sincerely hope that our contribution will advance stabilization in the liberated areas and promote returns. In January this year, Japan decided to contribute a sum of $105 million to UN agencies, IFRC, ICRC, Japanese NGOs and so on, to support IDPs and Syrian Refugees in Iraq. Japan has provided over $256 million in total for assistance to Syrian Refugees and IDPs in Iraq since 2014. We would like to call on other donors to continue their support to Iraq.”

Delivery of IDP Shelter Site in Kerbala and launch of two UN-Habitat projects in Iraq funded by the Government of Japan

Kerbala, 30 March 2016 - Today the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) organized a ceremony to mark the delivery of a new IDP shelter site in Kerbala and to launch two projects funded by the Government of Japan to support to the humanitarian response and recovery activities in Iraq to be implemented by UN-Habitat: namely, the “Gender-sensitive Durable Shelter Support” and “Promoting Urban Recovery in Newly Liberated Areas in Iraq”. The ceremony took place in Kerbala, where a new shelter site is delivered by UN-Habitat through generous funding from the Government of Japan provided in 2015. The new site was planned and equipped with durable prefabricated shelter units, basic infrastructure and public facilities. As of 3 March 2016, Kerbala Governorate has received more than 67,000 IDPs. In this phase the IDP shelter site in Kerbala is expected to accommodate more than 400 vulnerable IDP families who are currently hosted in hotels and Housainyat in the city.

Despite the efforts of the national government and local authorities in providing support to IDPs and returnees, the severe budget crises because of the decline in the oil prices and the cost of the war against ISIL necessitate the mobilization of substantial humanitarian support. H.E. Mr. Fumio Iwai, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, stated that he is glad to support UN-Habitat’s projects across Iraq to improve living conditions of IDPs. He also emphasized that the Government of Japan is committed to engage with the humanitarian and stabilization efforts in Iraq and they will stand side by side with the people of Iraq to move forward on the liberation from terrorism.

In few weeks another four shelter sites implemented by UN-Habitat will be concluded to host more than 10,000 IDPs in Baghdad, Duhok and Missan. Ms. Lise Grande, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, announced to the media that the Government of Japan has provided substantial financial support to help the IDPs and the returnees in collaboration with the UN agencies and the Government of Iraq. Ms. Grande added that provision of durable shelters implemented by UN-Habitat is the most dignified option for IDPs until their return is secured.

Dr. Erfan Ali, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, in his remarks underlined the importance of the new Urban Recovery initiative that will be funded by Japan based on the acquired experiences of UN-Habitat, aiming to support empowerment of communities in newly liberated areas in Iraq through self-repair and self-maintenance of housing and basic community infrastructure damaged by crisis.

H.E. Mr. Nsaief AlKhatabi, Chairman of Kerbala Provincial Council, expressed his gratitude to the Government of Japan as well as to UN-Habitat and all other UN agencies for supporting Kerbala Governorate to tackle challenges faced by IDPs and host communities who are suffering from severe country-wide financial crisis.
The Netherlands provides generous funding to accelerate stabilization and returns in newly liberated areas

Baghdad, 31 March 2016 – The Kingdom of the Netherlands is giving USD5.69 million (€5 million) to the United Nations Development Programme to support stabilization in areas newly liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The Dutch contribution will be allocated in two installments to UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) which channels fast-track support to liberated areas to help rehabilitate civic infrastructure, kick-start local economies, boost government capacity and promote community reconciliation.

During the signing ceremony today in Baghdad, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Line Grande, said: “Hundreds of thousands of displaced Iraqis are ready to return home to newly liberated areas. Helping to stabilize these areas, many of which have been badly destroyed, is one of our highest priorities. We are enormously grateful to the Dutch Government for their generous support”.

Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Baghdad, Mr. Jan Van Weijen, said: “The Netherlands is actively participating in the Global anti-ISIL Coalition which is helping the Government of Iraq to liberate territories occupied by Da’esh. Through FFIS, Internally Displaced People can move back to their homes soon after liberation in order to continue their lives in peace”. Established in June 2015, FFIS is working in nine newly liberated areas in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninewa and Diyala Governorates. FFIS has just started to work in Ramadi where widespread destruction and contamination by booby-traps have slowed stabilization and returns.

UN concerned for safety of civilians returning to liberated areas contaminated with explosives, reaffirms commitment to help free Iraq from the threat of mines and unexploded remnants of war

Baghdad, 04 April 2016 - This year’s commemoration of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action comes at a critical time, when hundreds of thousands of people displaced by ISIL in Iraq are returning to their homes, anxious to rebuild their lives. The United Nations is deeply worried that their ability to return safely is impeded by widespread contamination of improvised explosive devices (IED) in many newly liberated towns and villages. The United Nations deplores ISIL’s booby-trapping of homes and public buildings, including schools and health clinics, and applauds the brave efforts of Iraqis to clear these devices in accordance with international standards.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, said “the level of IED contamination in newly liberated areas is unparalleled. These devices have killed or injured hundreds of people and are preventing families from returning safely to their homes. On this important day, we reaffirm our commitment to help Iraqis free their country from the threat of mines and other remnants of war and pledge to do everything possible to help educate families about the risks IEDs pose”.

Germany donates EUR 4 million to strengthen community policing

Baghdad, 05 April 2016 - The Federal Republic of Germany has donated EUR 4 million to IOM Iraq to support its “Strengthening Community Policing in Iraq” project between March 2016 and December 2017.

By supporting community policing in Iraq, IOM enhances overall efforts to advance democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Iraq in liberated areas. Community-policing models promote mediation and negotiation to resolve conflicts and build trust between the community and the police.

The Community Police Project includes training on community policing principles, establishing Community Police Forums, and encouraging dialogue between civil society and law enforcement agencies.

In 2015, a total of 16 Community Policing Forums were established across six governorates in southern, central and northern Iraq, engaging over 500 community members, 80 police officers, more than 80 government officials and 70 civil society members.

The project will reinforce these efforts by strengthening the capacity of the Community Police in Iraq and increasing the capacity of communities and civil society to engage in constructive dialogue on security issues.

The project will enhance the existing community police infrastructure and provide needed equipment to improve police access to communities in liberated areas, but also in central and southern Iraq.

The training component will target law enforcement personnel, as well as representatives of internally displaced Iraqi communities, to facilitate the work of the community police, particularly in areas of return.

The training sessions will provide an opportunity for police, community members and civil society actors to jointly identify existing challenges and possible solutions, thus encouraging communication and collaboration between the police and communities. These forums also facilitate creating a space for the meaningful participation and representation of women.

The project will be implemented in the governorates of Anbar, Babylon, Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Sulaymaniyah. IOM’s main partners for the project will be the Ministry of Interior, specifically the Community Police Directorates of the Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “We are pleased to contribute to the stabilization of liberated areas and a few other selected governorates through the Community Policing Project, funded by the Federal Republic of Germany. Initiatives like these, which develop and implement a community-based security approach, are crucial in the aftermath of a devastating and violent conflict like Iraq’s. The project will also help us better address the needs of displaced Iraqis who return to their homes, particularly in terms of feeling safe and protected, in coordination with the Central Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government.”
The UN warns that civilians in Fallujah are at extreme risk and need urgent help

Baghdad, 9 April 2016 - The United Nations is receiving reports that humanitarian conditions in Fallujah are worsening and human suffering is increasing. Under control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since early 2014, civilians are at extreme risk. With the siege of Fallujah tightening, supplies are not reaching civilians. There are credible reports from key informants that people wanting to leave the city and seek safety are unable to do so. “We are profoundly worried about Fallujah. There are reports of widespread food shortages and lack of medicines”, said Lise Grande, the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “We don’t have access to the city, but we have to assume based on what we are hearing that people are in terrible trouble”.

In late March, the Government of Iraq informed the United Nations that it intended to open safe corridors to allow civilians to exit the city. “Fallujah is an active conflict zone. We have received reports that ISIL has killed civilians attempting to leave and controls potential escape routes. We have also received reports that the little food and medicines available have been used for ISIL fighters, denying civilians the support they need to survive. With so much at stake, all parties to the conflict have to do everything possible to protect civilians and respect their right to receive life-saving humanitarian support”, said Ms. Grande. Humanitarian partners continue to engage with civil and military authorities to find the best ways to reach civilians in areas under siege. “We are ready to respond to help people in need. We are scaling up, pre-positioning stocks and expanding our assistance in the sites where displaced people may go”, said Ms. Grande. “Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain trapped and under siege in Iraq. People trying to flee conflict areas in search of safety are often held-up or prevented from moving. This is wrong—civilians have the right to protection and help”. The United Nations estimates that 10 million people in Iraq need some form of humanitarian assistance including 3.4 million people who have been displaced since January 2014. An estimated 3 million people are living under ISIL control. More than 540,000 people have returned to their homes. Only 20 per cent of the humanitarian appeal for 2016 has been funded.

Ayad: UNDP helped restart the life of my family in Tikrit

Tikrit, March—April 2016 - For 25 year-old Ayad, the café he owns in the city of Tikrit, in Salah al-Din Governorate in Iraq, with his three brothers is the realization of a life-long dream and a valuable source of income and stability for his family.

Last year, when the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) invaded Tikrit, a nightmare began for Ayad and his family, who were forced to close the café and flee their home.

“Now I can see my community being rebuilt. Hopefully this progress will continue,” said Ayad

Through FFIS’s Cash for Work programme in newly liberated areas, 500 people, mostly youth, are receiving income and 120 shopkeepers have received small grants to reopen their businesses. Ayad enjoys providing a venue where patrons can come together, drink tea and play backgammon. Last year, when the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) invaded Tikrit, a nightmare began for Ayad and his family, who were forced to close the café and flee their home. The family was forced to separate and seek refuge in different parts of the country.

After months of displacement in search of safety, security, and a harassment-free environment, Ayad and his brothers were able to return home following the expulsion of ISIL from Tikrit. His parents and sister, however, remain trapped in an ISIL controlled territory. Ayad sees the café as the only means of salvation for his family. He participated in the UNDP Cash for Work programme in Tikrit, financed through the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS).

“The Cash for Work programme enabled me to re-establish my business and helped restart the life of my family,” said Ayad, who prefers to remain anonymous for security concerns. “Now I can see my community being rebuilt. Hopefully this progress will continue.” Further receiving a micro-grant through FFIS, Ayad raised enough money to reopen and renovate the café. The money generated goes directly to support the basic needs of his parents, and eventually Ayad hopes to raise enough to pay for their return to Tikrit. Through FFIS’s Cash for Work programme in newly liberated areas, 500 people, mostly youth, are receiving income and 120 shopkeepers have received small grants to reopen their businesses.

UNDP supports the Government of Iraq in its efforts to stabilize newly liberated areas by restoring delivery of basic services, jumpstarting the local economy, strengthening the leadership role of the Government and promoting community reconciliation.
EU reassures commitment to help the people of Iraq “regain hope in their institutions”

Amman, 14 April 2016 - The National Advisory Committee (NAC) of UNDP’s Local Area Development Programme (LADP) met in Amman today, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Planning from the Federal Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) Director General for Regional Development, and the European Union (EU) Ambassador in Iraq. NAC Chairs, governors and representatives of 12 Iraqi Governorates thoroughly discussed development challenges, achievements and steps needed for joint planning, as well as the implementation of strategies endorsed in the past months. Opening the meeting, Iraq’s Deputy Minister of Planning, Mr. Maher Johan, said: “As the country is engaged in a military campaign against terrorism and an economic crisis, we need to walk faster and together to enhance cooperation at the local and central levels in comprehensive development planning and strategies. We are in urgent need of continuous support from the EU and UNDP.”

KRG’s Director General for Regional Development, Mr. Nawzad Tawfiq, conveyed a similar call for “full support to Iraq’s governorates and the Kurdistan Region. With the help of LADP, Provincial Development Strategies have been conceptualized for Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniyah for the years 2016-2018.”

The EU Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Patrick Simonet, reassured: “The EU is well placed to help build some prospects for the people of Iraq to believe in the future and regain hope in their institutions, country, and economic and political progress. It is a new beginning for Iraq that has started to think about the day after the defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and is mobilized towards reconstruction and national reconciliation.”

UNDP has provided direct support to 12 Governorates, including in provincial development, national and local urban planning, capacity development and capacity building, service delivery, and data management. “Thanks to the EU, we will be able to further expand our support to Iraq’s local and national institutions,” said LADP Programme Manager, Ms. Isabela Uribe. “Through comprehensive strategic planning and implementation, uninterrupted coordination between the central and local levels, and ensuring the voices of local communities are well heard in decision making circles, we are helping Iraq move towards sustainable development solutions; thus paving the way for a better future.”

UN-Habitat also contributes to these efforts through addressing the challenges of urban development in Iraq. “On the short term, substantial efforts will be exerted jointly with UNDP on Urban Damage Assessment of some liberated areas,” noted Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, Mr. Erfan Ali. “On the strategic level, the programme is developing the National and Provincial Urban strategies, in addition to several pilots on spatial planning and municipal finance.”

IOM Iraq CRP organizes provincial conferences

Baghdad, 15 April 2016 - IOM Iraq’s Community Revitalization Programme (CRP) is conducting provincial conferences in 13 governorates across Iraq between February and April 2016. CRP is a multi-sectoral programme that aims to contribute to stabilization in Iraq by improving the conditions for sustainable economic and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals in communities with significant populations of displaced persons and returnees. Now in its fifth annual phase, CRP is funded by the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

This week, on 11th April, the Baghdad provincial conference involved Baghdad Provincial Council members, NGO representatives, community leaders and IOM staff. The day-long provincial conferences have also taken place in Babylon, Basra, Dohuk, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Missan, Sulaymaniyah and Thi-Qar. Upcoming Provincial Conferences will be held in Ninewa, Najaf and Kerbala governorates.

The provincial conferences, which mark the culmination of IOM’s community assessment and engagement process over the past five months, are organized in coordination with Iraqi authorities at the central ministerial level – namely the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – and at the governorate and local levels.

The conferences provide a unique opportunity for joint consultations between IOM, government representatives, community members, NGOs and UN agencies. During this CRP phase, IOM is planning to implement 49 CAPs with a focus on improving essential infrastructure and services by supporting education and healthcare, rehabilitating electrical networks and water and sanitation systems, and supporting recreational activities.

CAPs play a vital role in the socioeconomic recovery of previously ISIS-controlled towns such as Zumar and Rabia. CAPs can also contribute to mitigating possible tensions in conflict-affected communities, caused by overstretched public services. CAPs are carried out in cooperation with community members, who are involved in all phases of implementation. IOM will also enhance renewable energy systems supported under previous projects aimed to assist displaced Iraqis and host communities, such as the provision of solar energy in community infrastructure.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “IOM is committed to work together with communities, local government and humanitarian partners in Iraq to identify community-level priority needs and develop and implement projects to address those needs. The ongoing conflict in Iraq has caused or deepened vulnerabilities in many communities, including those hosting large numbers of displaced persons. We thank the US State Department – PRM for their generous support to sustain this essential program to assist Iraqi communities to rebuild and develop their communities’ structures.”

Dr. Riyadh al-Adhadh, Head of Baghdad’s Provincial Council, said: “We need projects that are based on the areas’ needs. Priority should be given to rehabilitating health centers and training their staff, to projects that address the needs of the unemployed and most vulnerable individuals, and to rebuilding schools. We thank IOM for assisting displaced people and the most vulnerable community members.”

CRP assists both displaced persons and host community members. To date, IOM Iraq’s community stabilization projects have improved the lives of more than 140,000 beneficiaries. Program components include individual livelihood support, business development services, psychosocial support, CAPs and coordination of humanitarian information.

In the current CRP phase IOM Iraq will provide more than 2,500 families with individual assistance. CAPs are expected to benefit 90,000 community members and CAPs development will employ an additional 1,000 beneficiaries.
The United Arab Emirates provides a generous contribution to help stabilize Iraq’s liberated areas

Abu Dhabi, 19 April 2016 – The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is contributing US$10 million to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to help accelerate the stabilization of areas newly liberated from Daesh. The UAE contribution will be allocated to UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS), and will be used to rehabilitate civic infrastructure, including hospitals and schools. Also, the project will support community development initiatives.

Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation, stated: “The UAE believes in the importance of bringing stabilization, peace and prosperity to the Iraqi people, especially those who have been affected by violence and terrorism. We look forward to working with UNDP and seeing improvements in the lives of Iraqi families returning to their liberated home areas.”

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, said during a signing ceremony today in Abu Dhabi: “Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis are ready to return home to newly liberated areas. This generous contribution will allow us to quickly improve conditions in key cities including Ramadi, where many neighbourhoods have been extensively damaged. We are hugely grateful to the United Arab Emirates for extending this support to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.”

Established in June 2015, FFIS is currently working in nine newly liberated areas in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninewa and Diyala Governorates. FFIS has started work in Ramadi where widespread destruction and contamination of booby-traps have slowed stabilization and the return of displaced families.

Erbil marks the launch of its Provincial Development Strategy 2016-2018 with a breathtaking audiovisual performance at the historic Citadel

Erbil, 20 April 2016 – At an official ceremony at Erbil’s historic Citadel, the Governorate of Erbil launched its Provincial Development Strategy. The ceremony was presided over by H.E. Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani, and attended by members of the Council of Ministers, diplomatic corps and the Erbil Government. H.E. Governor of Erbil, Mr. Nawzad Hadi, presented the provincial strategy.

The ceremony was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization with support from UNDP’s Local Area Development Programme which is funded by the European Union. The ceremony included a breathtaking audiovisual performance and celebrated Erbil’s role as the “capital of tolerance and diversity.”

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani praised the strategy saying: “The announcement of this strategic plan during such a difficult time demonstrates that the will and determination of our people for building a better future and for promoting tolerance and coexistence is much more stronger than the will of those who try to stop our path to prosperity and growth.”

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, said: “This is a far-reaching strategy that builds on Erbil’s impressive record and lays the foundation for Erbil’s continuing resilience and future growth. It has six smart goals and a realistic timeframe for implementation.”

Erbil is the second governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, after Sulaimaniyah, to officially launch its Provincial Development Strategy. Dohuk will launch its strategy in coming weeks. Through its pioneering Local Area Development Programme, UNDP is providing direct support to twelve Governorates to improve sector-wide planning and implementation, strengthen budget execution and service delivery, improve coordination between central and governorate levels and increase the participation of communities in local development.

The Head of the EU Liaison Office in Erbil, Mr. Patrick Geysen, said, “The EU, through UNDP’s expertise, is supporting the institutions in addressing current challenges, but relying on the leadership of national and local governments, civil society organizations and citizens at the national and local levels.”

Governor of Erbil, Mr. Nawzad Hadi, and Head of HCECR, Mr. Dara Al-Yacubi, addressed the audience, highlighting the role of Erbil in hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and recognizing the importance of the new strategy for accelerating Erbil’s growth and sustainable human development.
UNHCR hands over ten desludging trucks to refugee camps in Duhok, Iraq

Duhok, 24 April 2016 - The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has handed over ten desludging trucks to the Board for Relief and Humanitarian Assistance (BRHA) to be used in two refugee camps, Domiz 1 and Domiz 2, in the Governate of Duhok.

Desludging black water from sewage holding tanks in Domiz 1 and Domiz 2 camps is a continuous activity. The trucks empty approximately 1,500 sewage holding pits, tanks and septic tanks on a regular basis. Since 2012, this activity has been funded by UNHCR and implemented through partners who hired the desludging trucks and maintained them.

"UNHCR purchased the ten sewage trucks to replace hired vehicles and cut annual costs. By handing over the trucks to BRHA, they will now operate and maintain them and take overall responsibility for desludging services on both camps", said Tanya Kareem, Head of Sub Office in Duhok.

As part of the handover, UNHCR will continue to pay the salaries of ten drivers, four monitors and one supervisor. The trucks have now been handed over to BRHA, who will assume the responsibility of handling enquiries by refugees regarding desludging activities in both camps.

Advocating for the new legislations and classification of the Informal Settlements/IDP areas

Baghdad, 24 April 2016 - UN-Habitat held a workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning, within the National Programme of Rehabilitation & Regularization of Informal Settlements /IDP Area in Iraq, aimed to introduce and promote the new legislative texts to address the illegal urban sprawl, preventing future urban irregularities and introduce the investment of remote sensing technology and utilizing satellite imagery in this regard.

These efforts come at a time when the number of displaced persons throughout Iraq exceeded 3.5 million living mostly in informal settlements, where as many of them will return to their original liberated areas but under different circumstances associated with weakness or even non-existence of structures and local municipal mechanisms. This will lead to increased urban irregularities and exacerbate the challenges associated with displacement, return and the consequent humanitarian, economic, social and environmental implications.

Dr. Mahdi al-Allaq, Chief of Staff of Prime Minister’s Office/ Chairman of the Steering Committee of the National Programme, stressed in his opening remarks on the necessity to seek solutions through the national programme, which is based on institutional, legal, technical and financial pillars that lead to drastic treatment of informal settlements in Iraq, according to the road map that was endorsed by the Council of Ministers last summer. He also underscored the necessity to address the problems of these areas through the application of fair and effective scientific solutions that fit the circumstances of each area after conducting the required surveys and assessments.

Mr. Stephen Hubler, the Senior Coordinator of Refugees & IDP Affairs Office in the US Embassy in Iraq, emphasized the keenness of the United States to provide humanitarian aid for displaced people in Iraq, which forms the foundation for achieving political reconciliation. He pointed out that this program is concerned with maintaining property rights and promoting the rule of law. He added that the best solutions for the displaced people are associated with their voluntary and safe return to their original areas or to their voluntary integration within the host communities when circumstances permit.

Dr. Erfan Ali, Head of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Iraq, stated that the technical team of the national program recently completed discussions with the Shura Council regarding the new two draft legislations, that were presented by the programme to address solutions for the current informal settlements and to prevent future irregularities, in addition to supporting regulations to addresses the root causes that lead to the emergence of this phenomenon in order to prevent its recurrence in the future.

He also referred to the recent approval of the Steering Committee on the proposed financial framework to help in the implementation of the directions of the Programme through the special fund mechanisms for informal settlements and IDP areas, which will be regulated through legislation currently under discussion.

The workshop’s sessions included presentations of the proposed new legislations and mechanisms for the legal treatment, which include the documentation of urban irregularities on State-owned or municipal lands within the boundaries of the Master Plans prior to the validating date of this law, according to modern and high resolution satellite images provided by the Programme, which were handed over during the workshop.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme has launched, earlier this month, the global campaign to improve and transform the lives of one billion slums’ dwellers and to stimulate the contribution of all countries, organizations and the private sector in this regard based on the Global Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the Goal 11 “to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

Development
Ministerial meeting assesses reforms in building systems for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 26 April 2016 – The progress achieved under the project Establishing a Building Control Regime for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and implemented by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), was discussed in a ministerial meeting today in Erbil. Ministers of Planning, Municipalities and Tourism, Housing and Construction, Head of Board of Investment, and Governor of Erbil attended the meeting.

Minister of Planning, H.E. Mr. Ali Sindi, said: “I firmly believe that this project exhibits one of the best examples of successful partnership of the United Nations and the Kurdistan Regional Government. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the project team of UNDP and UN-Habitat for the tremendous efforts exerted into this project. I hope that the outcomes are another step towards further reform of the building system.”

Over the period of December 2014 to March 2016, and at the request of the Ministry of Planning, UNDP and UN-Habitat joined efforts with the Kurdistan Council of Ministers and government counterparts to support the development of an effective, efficient and locally adapted building control regime in order to improve the investment environment and contribute to sustainable development.

UNDP Acting Country Director, Mr. Sultan Hajiyev, noted: “With the strong commitment of the Kurdistan Region authorities, construction practices have been revisited, modernized and aligned with international standards to reflect health, safety and environmental protection measures in an efficient and cost effective manner.”

Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, Mr. Erfan Ali, underscored “the principle outputs in this phase which included the outlines of a new building regulation, six building codes, in addition to comprehensive analysis on building permits procedures.” He added: “No doubt, these efforts represent substantial contribution in the reform of urban development sector in KR-I.”

Participants in the meeting also discussed the way forward, including the update of a comprehensive set of new building codes, finalization of the building regulation, and developing the capacity of respective institutions on the application of the building regulation and the updated building codes.

UNDP Iraq FFIS Progress Report Quarter I- 2016

Baghdad, 27 April 2016 - During the first quarter of 2016, the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq increased its work to nine areas in total. With the expansion of stabilization in Salah Al-Din governorate to Al Dour and Mkeishifa, the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) created a corridor of stabilization which has witnessed mass returns. Close to 90% of people in Tikrit, Al Dour and Mkeishifa returned. FFIS support in Tikrit directly benefited around 135,000 people while 50,000 people benefited in Al Dour/ Mkeishifa. Another corridor was opened in Ninewah Governorate for Rabia-Sinuni and an estimated 60,000 people are directly benefiting from FFIS interventions, mostly health, water and livelihoods. Interventions in Beji (Salah Al-Din governorate) and Sinjar (Ninewah governorate) have been delayed due to the large destruction, concentrated IED/UXO contamination and close proximity to the frontline. Ramadi FFIS activities, in Anbar province, are slowly taking off as certain areas are being cleared of IEDs and returns are increasing. The first generators were installed in Saidiqiya and Matheeq neighborhoods while 19 rehabilitation projects are currently being advertised. Activities in Diyala governorate focused on Saadiyah town where the rehabilitation of the health centre, main water plant, small business support and the procurement of electricity materials is underway.

HIGHLIGHTS
UNHCR completed its winter assistance activities to help displaced Iraqi families cope with harsh winter temperatures. UNHCR surpassed the initial winter assistance target of 60,000 families, and reached 84,290 families across Iraq with core relief items or shelter support.

Across Iraq, deteriorating weather conditions and rainstorms resulted in significant tent destruction. UNHCR replaced hundreds of damaged tents to meet the urgent shelter needs of displaced Iraqis living in camps.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS
Operational Context
According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), the estimated number of internally displaced Iraqis now exceeds 3.32 million, spread across more than 3,600 locations countrywide. Conflict and violence continue to affect most of Central and North-Central Iraq, including Anbar, Nineawa, Salah al Din and Kirkuk governorates. Displacement continued throughout Anbar, Kirkuk, Nineawa and Salah al Din governorates. Access to safety for IDPs continues to be a challenge across Iraq.

Access to many of Iraq’s governorates remains contingent upon sponsorship and many families cannot cross checkpoints and remain stuck at governorate borders. The inability of civilians to access safety is a major protection concern, both on account of being prevented from fleeing areas under the control of armed groups or due to restrictions imposed by authorities. Additionally, a trend has been observed whereby newly displaced Iraqis are being forcibly transferred to camps where restrictions on their freedom of movement are imposed in a manner disproportionate to any legitimate concern, including those related to security. This was noted in Nazrawa and Garmawa camps in central and northern Iraq, respectively. The siege of Falluja is ongoing, as supply lines have been cut off. Civilians in the city continue to be subjected to shelling and airstrikes, with many resulting casualties. They are reportedly facing shortages in basic necessities, fuel, clean water and medicine.

As of end February, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix identified more than 553,000 people who have returned to their areas of origin in Anbar, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Nineawa and Salah al Din governorates. Returnee families remain vulnerable as they face a lack of livelihood opportunities, destruction of property, contamination by explosive remnants of the conflict, limited availability of food and non-food items, documentation problems as well as poor access to services, health, clean water and education. UNHCR and the UN humanitarian country team do not encourage organized returns of IDPs in view of the continued absence in many locations of protection conditions conducive to return.

However, support is provided to spontaneous IDP returnees whenever it is safe to do so. Temperatures continued to drop across Iraq, with displaced families living in tents and unfinished buildings struggling to cope with heavy rains and cold. This is particularly challenging in the mountainous areas of Duhok and Sulaymaniyah in the KR-I, where the conditions remained challenging for the displaced, despite the assistance given by the international community.

United States announces additional $20 million in food assistance for Iraq

Washington, D.C., 29 February 2016
- The United States is providing an additional $20 million in emergency food assistance for Iraq to address the humanitarian crisis resulting from the ongoing conflict, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Stuart E. Jones announced today.

This contribution supports purchase of food for family food parcels and immediate response rations for vulnerable Iraqis. The family baskets include food to be prepared, such as flour, rice, oil, and dry peas and beans, while the ready-to-eat baskets are for displaced families who do not have access to kitchens. They include canned meat, canned peas and beans, dates, and biscuits.

With this new funding the U.S. Government - through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) - is helping the UN World Food Program reach 1.5 million displaced and conflict affected Iraqis throughout the country. This contribution is coming at a critical time for the UN World Food Program, as it has been forced to reduce levels of assistance in both the size and frequency of distributions due to severe funding constraints.

Prolonged violence perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Iraq, pushing it to crisis levels not seen in years. Iraq is one of the fastest growing displacement crises in the world, with more than 3.3 million people forced from their homes since January 2014.

Since 2014, the United States has provided nearly $624 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance for the Iraqi people for critically needed relief items, food, shelter, clean water, medical services and the protection of displaced populations. The Government of Iraq is leading the response to this crisis, but the United States remains committed to supporting the Iraqi people during their time of need.
IOM facilitates return of Ghanaian trafficking victim from Iraq

Baghdad, 05 March 2016 - IOM’s offices in Ghana and Iraq have helped a trafficked young Ghanaian migrant to return safely from Iraq to her home in Ghana’s Ashanti Region. Linda*, 22, was a teacher in a private school in Ghana, but was convinced by a middleman that she would earn more in Europe working as a waitress or as a supermarket assistant. He told her that he could arrange her passage to Europe and get her a job that would pay her USD 300 a month. Linda agreed and paid him USD 250 for her passport and an initial USD 350 for transportation. She also promised to give him three months of her future pay. But the day she left Ghana, she was told at the airport that she was headed to Erbil in Iraq, not to Europe as promised. There she was forced to work as a housemaid in harsh conditions, working long hours with little rest or food. Her employers took away her passport. By chance she met a judge, who notified an NGO, Heartland Alliance International (HAI), about her case. HAI contacted IOM Iraq, which identified the case as one of human trafficking for which repatriation assistance was needed. IOM Iraq helped Linda to leave her job, located a government shelter where she was provided with support for a month, and facilitated her repatriation to Ghana. When she arrived in Ghana, IOM Ghana’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme provided her with onward transport to her hometown and initiated her reintegration. A business plan was drawn up and in October 2015 Linda opened a grocery shop, which she now runs in her hometown.

The operation was supported by IOM Iraq’s European Union-funded HIJRA-AMINA programme, which aims to enhance the migration management capacities of the Government of Iraq. Under the project, IOM Iraq provides assistance, repatriation and reintegration support to foreign nationals identified as victims of human trafficking.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “We are pleased to cooperate with Iraqi authorities to assist migrants and victims of human trafficking who request support to return home. We appreciate IOM Ghana providing reintegration assistance in this case. We look forward to further cooperation with our partners and donors, including the European Union, to facilitate safe, sustainable and voluntary return.”

*pseudonym

IOM Iraq conducts gender-based non-food needs assessment

Iraq, 8 March 2016 - In 2015 IOM distributed over 74,000 lifesaving non-food item (NFI) kits as one component of IOM’s on-going response to the continuing humanitarian crisis in Iraq. These NFI distributions assisted over 427,000 vulnerable internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Iraq’s 18 governorates.

IOM’s NFI kit items are selected to meet the needs of IDPs and seasonal priorities. Full NFI kits include a kitchen set, a hygiene kit, tarpaulin, rechargeable light, mattresses, and pillows. Summer kits also include a fan, a cool box and plastic mat; winter kits include a carpet, a heater, and warm blankets.

In anticipation of NFI needs for 2016, and as part of IOM’s evidence-based approach, IOM, with funding from the Government of Japan, conducted a Gender NFI Needs Assessment in nine governorates of Iraq: Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, Missan, Najaf, Nineawa, Salah al-Din and Thi-Qar. The assessment, conducted in late 2015, explores the different NFI needs of internally displaced women, men, boys and girls living in camps and critical shelter arrangements.

In an effort to tailor the content of future NFI kits to meet the needs of beneficiaries over time, IOM carried out focus group discussions and quantitative questionnaires with a total of 496 women, men, boys and girls. The findings of the assessment revealed that in addition to gender and shelter type, NFI needs are mainly affected by the IDPs’ background, place of origin, and duration of displacement.

The findings of the assessment showed that more than 70 percent of both men and women interviewed expressed a need for basic household items such as mattresses, heaters, cookware, lighting and storage containers. A greater percentage of women identified the following items as a priority: cooking facilities, washing container, sheets, and hygiene/sanitation items, including sterilizer/antiseptic, dish detergent, insect bite treatment and sanitary pads. Men highlighted the need for the following hygiene/sanitation items: razors, clippers and shaving cream.

As part of the assessment, IOM conducted a data validation exercise with IOM’s field-based Rapid Assessment and Response Teams, and review of culturally appropriate approaches for the distribution of sensitive personal items.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “Thanks to the Government of Japan, this gender-specific data on the needs of displaced Iraqis – women, men, boys and girls – will enable IOM Iraq to further tailor the items in our non-food item kits. It will inform our humanitarian response to ensure IOM addresses the needs of vulnerable displaced Iraqis, in coordination with the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team, humanitarian partners, government authorities and donors.”

Assessment findings have been summarized in the “Comprehensive Gender Non-Food Item Needs Assessment” report. The report and data are available upon request from IOM.
**Humanitarian situation**

**UNHCR concerned at restrictions on displaced Iraqis in camps**

_Geneva, 11 March 2016_ – The UN Refugee Agency is concerned about a rising trend of newly-displaced Iraqis being forcibly transferred to camps where restrictions on their freedom of movement are imposed in a manner disproportionate to any legitimate concern, including those related to security.

"While recognizing the responsibility of authorities to undertake security screening of people fleeing territory controlled by extremist groups, we urge the government to set up clear procedures and facilities for this purpose that are separate from camps established to provide shelter and other humanitarian assistance to displaced Iraqis," UNHCR spokeswoman Ariane Rummery told a news briefing in Geneva on Friday (March 11).

Nazrawa camp, in Kirkuk Governorate, was opened by UNHCR in November 2015 for internally displaced Iraqis seeking safety from conflict and severe human rights abuses, thanks to flexible funding from over ten donor countries.

Approximately 2,000 displaced Iraqis are currently residing in Nazrawa camp. However, authorities have progressively imposed movement restrictions on residents of the camp. Since February 22 all residents have been confined to the camp, irrespective of whether or not they have completed security screening procedures.

Instances of forcible relocation of Iraqis into camps, as well as disproportionate restrictions on their freedom of movement, have also been recorded by protection partners elsewhere in Iraq. In Garmawa camp in northern Iraq, Iraqis who were forcibly relocated to the camp from villages in Tilkiaf District in 2015 continue to face restrictions on their freedom of movement, including transportation and living costs.

It was opened in response to a long-standing request by the Kirkuk authorities for more support from the humanitarian community in their efforts to provide protection and assistance to large numbers of internally-displaced persons, or IDPs, in the governorate – currently numbering nearly 400,000.

More than half of the respondents (56 percent) believed that they fit asylum criteria ‘no hope in the future’ as their primary reason for departure. Secondary reasons for departures for a significant number of respondents included general security concerns and unemployment.

Respondents said the main sources of information used to plan their journey were word of mouth (40 percent), social media (23 percent), and Internet (22 percent). Regarding the journey, the average cost was USD 6,000 per person – including transportation and living expenses. More than one-third of interviewees took a month or more to reach Europe.

Main countries of intended destination were Germany, Finland, Sweden, Austria and Belgium. The reasons for choosing the country of destination were the impression that it is ‘easier to get asylum,’ and ‘relatives/friends already living in the country.’ More than 200 respondents identified Germany as their intended destination. At the time of interview, 180 respondents were in Germany; other countries included Austria (72), Finland (55) Sweden (43) and Hungary (33).

When surveyed on return intentions, 67 percent said that they do not intend to return to Iraq, while 21 percent are waiting to decide, and 12 percent are planning to return. The vast majority (94 percent) believed that they fit asylum eligibility criteria and 92 percent reported having applied for asylum once they reached the country of destination. Only 12 percent had been granted refugee status at the time of interview, 56 percent were being processed, and 25 percent reported being rejected.

In 2015 IOM received an increased number of assistance requests from Iraqis in Europe to return to their home country. Through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme, in coordination with Iraq’s Ministry of Migration and Displacement, airport authorities and IOM missions in host countries, IOM Iraq in 2015 provided support to nearly 3,500 Iraqis to return to Iraq from 14 European countries.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “Thanks to funding from DFID, this report provides valuable data to better understand the difficult experience of Iraqi migrants travelling to Europe. The reasons behind the enormous risk and expenses these Iraqi migrants incur provide important insights for IOM, humanitarian partners, government representatives, partners and donors, to develop more targeted information campaigns and responses to the migration crisis.”

To access the “Migration Flows from Iraq to Europe” report, please visit http://iomiraq.net/reports/migration-flows-iraq-europe
Humanitarian situation

Humanitarian partners race to reach people fleeing Heet and areas west of Ramadi

Baghdad, 16 March 2016 - Humanitarian partners are rushing to provide emergency assistance to an estimated 35,000 people who have been newly displaced in hard-to-reach areas west of Ramadi.

Lise Grande, the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator said, “Thousands of people who have been trapped in Heet for months are trying to reach safety. The UN doesn’t have full access and we are very worried that some of the families who are escaping are in areas very close to the front lines. We are worried for their safety”.

Displaced families are receiving ready-to-eat food, safe drinking water and hygiene kits through the Rapid Response Mechanism, which is managed by UNICEF and the World Food Programme and supported by the UN’s Population Fund, the International Organization for Migration and nine non-governmental organizations.

Health assistance is being provided by the World Health Organization, which has dispatched two mobile health clinics and two medical teams. “You can tell how difficult conditions are in Heet by how many people are seeking urgent health assistance. The mobile clinics dealt with 1,300 consultations during just their first two days”.

Prior to the displacement from Heet, more than 53,000 people had been displaced in Anbar Governorate since the beginning of the year. Many of these families have sought safety and help in already overcrowded camps and temporary settlements in and around Ameriyat al Falluja IDP complex, Habbaniyah Tourist City, and Bzeibiz bridge.

The United Nations and partners have requested US$861 million for 2016 to provide emergency relief to 7.3 million vulnerable Iraqis. Only 9 per cent, $75 million, has been received so far.

“The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues to worsen. Additional resources are urgently needed so we can help people who depend on humanitarians to survive”, said Ms. Grande.

IOM Magnet II assesses impact on sustainable return and reintegration of Iraqis to Kurdistan

Iraq, 18 March 2016 - The MAGNET II project, which facilitates the sustainable reintegration of Iraqi nationals who voluntarily returned from six European countries to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) through vocational training and job placements, came to a close this week with a final meeting in Brussels.

The gathering, hosted by IOM, brought together government officials from the KRI and the project’s six participating European countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Representatives from the European Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs) and Switzerland also participated in the meeting.

The project, which will conclude on 31 March 2016, is funded by the European Union Return Fund.

Between April 2014 and March 2016, the MAGNET project supported more than 170 returnees, with 86 finding employment, while 63 benefited from vocational, IT and language trainings to improve their prospects of finding a job. This is a significant achievement during this period of multiple threats and challenges in KRI, which include the fight against ISIS, the subsequent massive displacement of more than one million Iraqis from the central region to the KRI, the ongoing fiscal crisis and the overall economic downturn.

“Despite these challenges and the fact that MAGNET doesn’t provide the full range of reintegration services, such as support for housing and business startups, MAGNET and similar reintegration projects are extremely important for the Kurdistan Regional Government,” said Shokr Yasseen Yasseen, the Director of the Bureau for Migration and Displacement of the Ministry of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq.

“The key to the success of the MAGNET II project is the individual counselling and mentoring support provided by IOM staff over a longer period of time as returnees seek employment and reestablish their lives in their communities of origin. Programmes like MAGNET II play a crucial role in the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants,” said Nazanine Nozarian, MAGNET II Project Manager.

Of the 141 beneficiaries interviewed at the end of the project, more than 77 percent reported satisfaction with their participation in the MAGNET II project. One of the beneficiaries, Goran Hasan Sadiq, said “I am very glad to have been assisted by MAGNET. I am lucky to have found a job only two months after my return to Erbil. Although my salary is low, USD 450 per month, I think this is a good start when you look at the current economic crisis in the KRI.” Goran is employed as a security guard in one of Erbil’s four-star hotels.

Of the companies that hired staff through MAGNET, 79 percent reported they were satisfied with the performance of their employees. Abdulkhaliq Abdullah, HR manager of Barza Security Company said: “MAGNET is an important project. It gives hopes to returnees and opportunities for companies and businesses looking for employees. It is interesting to see that the project also provides vocational training to upgrade the returnees’ skills before starting the job.”

Raffaella Battella of the European Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs) said, “The EC encourages the participating EU Member States and the Kurdistan Regional Government to keep supporting migrants to find jobs in the KRI. IOM should continue to build synergies with other reintegration projects and to work with multiple stakeholders, including consulates.”

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “IOM saw a significant increase in the voluntary return of Iraqis in the last quarter of 2015. Thousands of Iraqi migrants travelled to Europe in 2015, but did not find the opportunities they were seeking and have chosen to return. In cooperation with government authorities, donor agencies and humanitarian partners, IOM is pleased to assist these returnees with socio-economic and moral support to rebuild their future in Iraq”.

The gathering, hosted by IOM, brought together government officials from the KRI and the project’s six participating European countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Representatives from the European Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs) and Switzerland also participated in the meeting.
Humanitarian situation

WFP witnessed the distribution of food assistance to approximately 3,000 households

Baghdad, 19 March 2016 - Once one of Iraq’s most popular tourism destinations among Iraqis, Al-Habbaniya Tourist City has now become a shelter for almost 4,600 displaced families as a result of the conflict. World Food Programme (WFP) visited the families in the city, located between Al-Khalidiya subdistrict and Ameriyat Al-Fallujah District in Anbar governorate. After listening to their stories and assessing their needs, WFP witnessed the distribution of food assistance to approximately 3,000 households in the area with Family Food Rations, which contain wheat flour, rice, cooking oil, and other necessary food items that will sustain them for the coming month.

Reaching vulnerable families with emergency supplies in Anbar

Baghdad, 22 March 2016 - Amid ongoing violence and displacement in Anbar Governorate, UNICEF continues to meet emergency needs of vulnerable children in dangerous situations. Hundreds of thousands of families have been displaced in the province since violence erupted in January 2014. The latest wave of displacement began in the first week of March 2016, when increased military activity forced 1,000 families from their homes. Two settlements have been established near the city of Heet, a small city not far from Baghdad. UNICEF and other agencies have access to people there, but one of the biggest concerns is that these people are close to areas of active conflict, along with other hazards such as mines and improvised explosives. Rapid Response Mechanism supplies were distributed in Waffa Camp on March 21.

Thanks to a generous contribution from ECHO, UNICEF used the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) to provide 1,000 families with safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene kits, and other supplies to meet their needs for one week. The RRM is ready to reach an additional 9,000 families over the next month.

UNICEF has also supplied prefabricated latrines and showers, jerry cans, water tanks, plastic garbage bags and water carried in trucks to vulnerable families. The security situation in Iraq continues to be highly unstable and fast moving. More than 10 million people need immediate, life saving humanitarian assistance, 4.7 million of which are children. Nationwide, the number of displaced people has risen to 3.3 million. In Anbar and Baghdad governorates UNICEF continues to improve its response time through the newly launched WASH Services Centres (WSC) initiative. These WSC are mobile facilities that can rapidly activate to meet the needs of people in fluid, unpredictable circumstances. Ten WSCs work closely with local authorities and other partners to ensure acceptable WASH services for displaced families in and out of camps.

“So far the WSCs have proven very efficient in providing rapid monitoring and response capabilities for urgent needs, especially during the ongoing humanitarian crisis linked to the security situation in Anbar Governorate,” said UNICEF Iraq Chief of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Ruben Um Bayiha. “However not only is the situation highly volatile, but we are also constrained by a $4.5 million funding gap—money which is needed to provide vital supplies such as sanitation units, water tanks, bottled water hygiene supplies for babies, for an estimated extra 10,000 families.”

By Chris Niles, UNICEF Consultant.

Japan contribution helps WFP support displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 March 2016 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a contribution of US$6 million from the Government of Japan towards its emergency food assistance programmes supporting displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees inside Iraq. Japan’s timely contribution arrives as the conflict in Iraq continues to drive people out of their homes with the number of internally displaced people exceeding three million across the country. Also compounding the situation, is the presence of nearly 250,000 Syrian refugees who have sought refuge in the northern Kurdistan region of Iraq.

“Japan has been a committed donor, supporting WFP in fighting hunger in Iraq,” said Jane Pearce, Representative and Country Director of WFP in Iraq. “We thank the Government of Japan and its people for their continued support to alleviate the suffering of displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees in this country.”

Japan’s contribution will allow WFP to support close to 500,000 internally displaced Iraqis and 35,000 Syrian refugees for the next nine months. Internal-
UNHCR: New IDPs arrive in Makhmour

Baghdad, 28 March 2016 - In the last three days, approx. 1,900 people have fled their homes following the Iraqi government’s military operation to retake control of villages east of the Tigris river, south of Mosul.

After arriving in Makhmour, displaced families have been temporarily accommodated at the youth centre. UNHCR is working closely with government authorities and partners to ensure that a first line of response is provided to the displaced.

UNHCR is currently installing two large Rubb Halls (temporary tent-like structures) capable of housing large numbers of people, to ease overcrowded conditions at the youth centre. The local authority has also made available an additional building that will be renovated by UNHCR to accommodate 43 families.

It’s expected that more families will continue to be displaced as military operations continue. UNHCR and other agencies are drawing up contingency plans to be able to assist families in the future.

Humanitarian situation

Senior UN official warns of dire consequences for millions of Iraqis due to funding shortfalls

New York, 23 March 2016 – Returning from a visit to Iraq, a senior United Nations relief official today drew attention to the worsening situation for more than 10 million people in need, and to the urgency to mobilize more funding for the humanitarian response.

“As the conflict expands and grows more complex, millions of people in Iraq are in increasingly dire need for international assistance,” warned John Ging, the Director of Operations of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

According to the UN, two years of instability and insecurity have had a devastating effect on all aspects of life in Iraq. Iraqi people continue to face immense humanitarian challenges, including widespread displacement, the destruction of homes and livelihoods, and difficulty in accessing humanitarian assistance. Over 3.3 million people have been displaced by violent conflict since January 2014.

Mr. Ging also highlighted that Iraq is among the most deadly countries in the world for civilians, with thousands injured and killed by explosive weapons and other conflict-related methods each year. Last year, more than 7,500 people were killed and nearly 15,000 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict.

In Baghdad, Mr. Ging visited the Takia site for internally displaced persons (IDP) and met with families forced from their homes, most from Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. Among those he met were a class of teenage girls from Ramadi whose families fled the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in April last year.

“I was struck by the enormous courage and positive energy of these girls who have endured such trauma and yet are so inspiring in their commitment to their studies with such a strong belief in a better future,” he said.

In Erbil, Mr. Ging met with displaced families that had fled violence in Mosul, the Ninewa Plains and Sinjar and are now living in informal sites, including a former chicken farm.

In meetings with officials from both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr. Ging complimented them for their generosity. “Communities across Iraq have shown exemplary solidarity with the displaced. The Kurdistan Region alone is hosting more than one million displaced people. However, they have limited resources which are nearing exhaustion. More funding is urgently required from the international community - otherwise people are facing a disaster”.

The UN official also complimented humanitarian organizations for their outstanding work under the leadership of Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator in the country. “Iraq is one of the most complex and dangerous environments for aid workers and their courage and dedication is truly inspiring,” he said.

Thanking donors for their generosity, Mr. Ging made an urgent appeal for additional funding for life saving supplies and medicine. The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 prepared by the UN and its partners is a highly-prioritized appeal. Despite this, there is a $731 million shortfall in the current response plan, which is only 15 per cent funded.

Meanwhile, he reminded parties involved in military operations to ensure the protection of civilians and the preservation of civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian law. “The protection of innocent civilians must be top priority not just in rhetoric, but most importantly in action,” he said.

UN News Center

Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Grande meets Head of Sunni Endowment

Baghdad, 31 March 2016 - United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Lise Grande, recently met with Dr. Abdullateef Al-Humaym, Head of the Sunni Endowment Authority in Iraq to discuss humanitarian efforts.
Humanitarian situation

Japan donates USD 4 Million to IOM Iraq to assist displaced Iraqis and Syrians

Baghdad, 01 April 2016 - The Government of Japan is providing a total of USD 4 million to IOM Iraq to support internally displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees. This contribution will support IOM’s response to the current humanitarian and displacement crisis in the country and will fund two projects over 12 months. Some USD 3.5 million will be used to help internally displaced people through the IOM project: Integrated Emergency Response and Community Revitalization Plan for IDPs, Returnees and Host Communities across Iraq. The project will focus on building transitional shelters from local materials for IDPs and returnee communities; providing primary, maternal and child health care through mobile medical teams to communities that have limited access to health services; and conducting community-based social cohesion activities. The latter will include peacebuilding and traditional mediation practices, and will focus on empowering community groups and will ensure the active participation of women, youth and ethno-religious minorities. This project will also incorporate use of materials donated by Japan, including eyeglasses, provided to displaced Iraqi children. Another USD 500,000 will be used to help vulnerable Syrian refugee and host community households in Iraq through another IOM project: Emergencies and Livelihood Assistance to Syrian Refugees in Iraq. Activities will include school transportation for Syrian refugee children and the provision of vocational skills and business training, income generating activities through involvement in cooperatives, and the rehabilitation of shared community infrastructure, in line with the Syrian Refugee and Resilience Plan (SRP) in Iraq. These projects align with IOM’s strategy to provide support to the most vulnerable groups across Iraq in close cooperation with humanitarian partners, and will build on IOM’s experience in Iraq of more than a decade in providing humanitarian assistance and community revitalization support.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “We greatly appreciate the Government of Japan’s ongoing support towards IOM’s response to the IDP and Syrian refugee crises. Those suffering displacement require a range of life-saving services. We look forward to continuing efforts, in cooperation with the UN Country Team, other humanitarian partners and the Government of Iraq, to strengthen our response to assist Iraqis affected by the current crisis, as well as Syrian refugees who require further support in light of the protracted crisis in Syria”.

Providing safe water and sanitation to Syrian refugees in Iraq

Domiz, 5 April 2016 - “When we arrived here there wasn’t enough water, but it’s better now. We have enough for everything we need,” says Shyar, a Syrian refugee from Qamishli, Syria. Water is delivered to their dwelling in Domiz Refugee Camp in the Kurdistan region of Iraq twice a week.

Thanks to a generous contribution from the German Development Bank, known as KfW, UNICEF is providing safe water for Syrian refugees in camps around Duhok, along with activities to educate families on how to protect themselves from waterborne disease.

Hygiene education is particularly important for those in Iraq because the country is cholera-endemic. UNICEF runs a variety of programmes designed to help refugee children and families stay healthy and safe.

In Domiz Camp, hygiene promotion messages have reached more than 30,000 people. UNICEF also supported a puppet show in 14 schools in four refugee camps to convey messages on how to maintain personal hygiene and conserve water.

Earlier this year more than 500 people attended an art and photography exhibition put on by Syrian refugee children in Domiz. UNICEF provided nine camp schools with soap and hygiene kits and mobilized 8,900 children to participate in hygiene promotion activities.

Thanks to KfW support, UNICEF has also restored the water and sanitation facilities in four schools in Domiz, and has installed nearly 15 kilometres of open channel drainage. Every month UNICEF collects and removes 150 tons of garbage in the camp and provides 1,800 extremely vulnerable people with hygiene kits.

Projects like these help ensure that children and families in Domiz are healthy and can live with dignity until they are able to return home.

By Chris Niles, UNICEF Consultant.

Improving the lives of more than 6,300 refugees in Gawilan Camp

Erbil, 7 April 2016 - 'An official celebration was held at the Gawilan camp on Thursday, April 7 to thank NGO’s, IOM, UNHCR and IRAH for a recent upgrade that will improve the lives of more than 6,300 refugees who live there. After two years of living in tents, more than 1,360 Syrian families began moving into permanent concrete two room homes in early 2016. The housing materials were donated and the refugees built their homes themselves.

“The new shelters will make life a little easier for those who have had to flee from their own homes back in Syria. They will protect families against fire, provide warmth in the winter and shade in the summer,” said Joseph Merks, UNHCR Coordinator for Kurdistan. Merks told the crowd that he visited two families who told him they are grateful for all the support they have received since the camp opening in 2014.’
UN warns that civilians in Fallujah are at extreme risk and need urgent help

Baghdad, 9 April 2016 - The United Nations is receiving reports that humanitarian conditions in Fallujah are worsening and human suffering is increasing. Under control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since early 2014, civilians are at extreme risk. With the siege of Fallujah tightening, supplies are not reaching civilians. There are credible reports from key informants that people wanting to leave the city and seek safety are unable to do so. “We are profoundly worried about Fallujah. There are reports of widespread food shortages and lack of medicines”, said Lise Grande, the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “We don’t have access to the city, but we have to assume based on what we are hearing that people are in terrible trouble”.

In late March, the Government of Iraq informed the United Nations that it intended to open safe corridors to allow civilians to exit the city. “Fallujah is an active conflict zone. We have received reports that ISIL has killed civilians attempting to leave and controls potential escape routes. We have also received reports that the little food and medicines available have been used for ISIL fighters, denying civilians the support they need to survive. With so much at stake, all parties to the conflict have to do everything possible to protect civilians and respect their right to receive life-saving humanitarian support”, said Ms. Grande. Humanitarian partners continue to engage with civil and military authorities to find the best ways to reach civilians in areas under siege. “We are ready to respond to help people in need. We are scaling up, pre-positioning stocks and expanding our assistance in the sites where displaced people may go”, said Ms. Grande. “Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain trapped and under siege in Iraq. People trying to flee conflict areas in search of safety are often held-up or prevented from moving. This is wrong—civilians have the right to protection and help”. The United Nations estimates that 10 million people in Iraq need some form of humanitarian assistance including 3.4 million people who have been displaced since January 2014. An estimated 3 million people are living under ISIL control. More than 540,000 people have returned to their homes. Only 20 per cent of the humanitarian appeal for 2016 has been funded.

Providing safe water in “The Hot Place”

Qoratu Camp, 12 April 2016 - It’s a special dress for a special day. Mina, 9, is wearing a brightly coloured traditional Kurdish costume and matching hat adorned with sequins—it was a gift from a stranger.

“I was in Sulaymaniyah shopping for a dress in the market,” Ghasan, Mina’s father says. “In Ramadi, where we are from, we don’t have this kind of dress. I was asking about the price and a Kurdish woman bought it for me.”

“I wanted to go to a picnic wearing Kurdish clothes,” Mina says.

Mina and her fellow students at the school in Qoratu Displacement Camp, where Ghasan is principal, have dressed up for an important occasion. This morning the children have taken a break from their normal routine and are gathered in the school courtyard to learn about the importance of correct hand washing and water conservation. The programme is supported by a generous contribution from the people of Japan.

The school is located in Garmyan, in the west of Iraq near the Iranian border. Most of the residents have been displaced by violence in Diyala and Ramadi. The school’s nine classrooms host 461 primary students in the morning, and 150 secondary students in the afternoon.

In spring the weather is fresh and cool and the fields green with crops, dotted with bright wild flowers. In the summer it’s quite different — temperatures can reach above 50°C. The literal meaning of Garmyan is “the hot place”. Safe water and sanitation are critical in such conditions.

Mina and her classmates watch a play and a puppet show produced by fellow students, then they line up to practice hand washing with soap at the tap stand.

“UNICEF has provided everything for the school,” Ghasan says. “They’ve given us desks, chairs and stationery. Recently the water network was connected and we are now pumping water from the well. Because there’s daily monitoring of sanitation conditions and water quality we haven’t had any serious diseases. I’d like to thank UNICEF. By opening this school it has given hope to the children.”

By Chris Niles, UNICEF Consultant.
New prefab shelter camp being built in Kerbala

Kerbala, April 2016 – Recently, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) organized a visit to the new Prefab Shelter camp in Kerbala, Iraq, for the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator Ms. Lise Grande, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq His Excellency Mr. Fumio Iwai, and senior representatives of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement and Governorate of Kerbala.

USAID’s Food for Peace provides US$41 million to help WFP support displaced families in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 April 2016 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq has welcomed a contribution of US$41 million from the Government of the United States to provide vital food assistance for over 1.3 million displaced Iraqis. The contribution from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) will allow WFP to provide family food rations for more than one million people for two and a half months, in addition to food vouchers for 370,000 people for one month. Immediate response rations will be provided to as many as 140,000 people for three months.

WFP distributes immediate response rations - canned food items - that last for three days, to displaced families on the move and family food rations to families who have settled in locations with cooking facilities. The rations contain wheat flour, rice, cooking oil and sugar, while food vouchers are given to those living in areas with access to functioning food markets.

“I am delighted that the United States remains committed to working with WFP to deliver food assistance to Iraq’s most vulnerable populations,” said Jane Pearce, Representative and Country Director of WFP in Iraq. “This generous and timely contribution from USAID’s FFP will help mitigate the suffering of many, as humanitarian needs outpace available resources.”

Since January 2014, the conflict in Iraq has triggered mass waves of displacement of more than 3.4 million Iraqis. WFP is currently reaching 1.5 million displaced people each month with food assistance.

Since the start of the conflict in 2014, USAID has contributed a total of US$88.6 million to WFP’s emergency operation in Iraq. To maintain its food assistance over the next six months for displaced Iraqis in need, WFP requires US$44.5 million until September 2016.

New shelter brings new hope for a widow

Baghdad, 13 April 2016 - UNHCR with its implementing partner Rebuild Iraq Recruitment Programme (RIRP) has helped build new homes for 35 families in districts of Baghdad who lost their shelters during sectarian conflict in 2006. The families, including female-headed households, now live in newly constructed houses in Al Rasheed and Gharb Dijlah districts. Among them is Faliha Hamed Salim 49, mother of seven. She fled her home in Al Rasheed District and stayed with relatives.

When the conflict ended four years later, Faliha returned home, to discover her house was totally demolished. Today, she and her family live in the new building, joined also by her sister’s family. Faliha bakes bread inside her new shelter that she sells to neighbors in order to support her family.

“My house was demolished”, she said. “I was paralyzed, had no money and no shelter. But now I started a new life in my new house after losing everything” she said.

By Reem Swaed
IOM: Displacement in Iraq Exceeds 3.4 Million

Baghdad, 19 April 2016 - The latest IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) identified 3,418,332 internally displaced Iraqis (569,722 families) from 1 January 2014 through 31 March 2016. Considering the available information, the UN Humanitarian Country Team has increased the humanitarian response planning figure from 3.3 million to 3.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Between 2 and 31 March 2016, an increase in displacement was recorded in the governorates of Anbar (48,378 individuals) and Salah al-Din (23,718 individuals) due to ongoing military operations.

As of 31 March 2016, the total IDP population comes from eight of Iraq’s 18 governorates; most of them are originally from the governorates of Anbar (43 percent or 1,486,866 individuals) and Ninewa (33 percent or 1,125,414 individuals).

Anbar is currently reporting multiple population movements due to ongoing conflict, including in the district of Heet. Repeated displacement flows have been observed from Heet to Ramadi district, where more than 30,000 IDPs were identified in March and April. This complex situation is further exacerbated by internal displacement affecting some areas of Ramadi district.

Since the beginning of March, within Anbar governorate, DTM Emergency Tracking identified an estimated 71,000 returnees (11,800 families) who have returned to their habitual residences in areas of Ramadi district, from within and outside the governorate of Anbar.

From 26 March to 18 April, 2,538 individuals (489 families) were displaced from villages south west of Makhmour in Ninewa governorate. This is the first monitored displacement as military operations to liberate Mosul and surrounding villages have been launched. A total of 553,104 individuals are reported to have returned to their location of origin across Iraq. Salah al-Din governorate has experienced the highest number of returns, with 262,074 individuals. Ninewa and Diyala also reported a high number of returnees (respectively 131,766 and 118,404), mainly due to improved security conditions.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said: “IOM is very concerned about ongoing and recent displacement across Iraq. With more than 3.4 million Iraqis now displaced, humanitarian resources are stretched. Additional resources are needed to assist displaced Iraqis, many of whom were forced to leave their homes at a moment’s notice and require comprehensive support. IOM will continue to cooperate with the UN Humanitarian Country Team, humanitarian partners, government authorities and our donors, to assist displaced populations throughout the country.”

The newly established IOM Iraq DTM portal contains the most recent DTM Dataset, Dashboards, Dynamic Displacement Map and previous DTM products: http://iraqdtm.iom.int/Downloads.aspx

The DTM information package has been developed by IOM in coordination with the UN Humanitarian Country Team to provide an inclusive update on the IDP situation in Iraq. The DTM is funded by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).

UNHCR: New tents at a disused stadium to shelter new IDPs

Debaga, 26 April 2016 - New tents are going up at a disused stadium provided by the local authorities and located near Debaga town in northern Iraq. An existing camp for displaced families in Debaga is overcrowded, with several families already sharing a shelter in the camp. Planned for 5,000 individuals, the camp is now housing over 6,200 persons.

As a result, hundreds of new arrivals – most recently from the villages of Adjali and Alahwath – are being temporarily housed in a large tent building [Rubb hall] erected by UNHCR until a more durable solution is found. Once the stadium site is developed, up to 800 families will be able to settle there. They will have their tent each and share latrines and showers.

The families fled their homes as the Iraqi Security Forces launched an offensive against villages held by extremist groups east of the Tigris River. It is part of a wider campaign aimed at eventually re-taking control of the city of Mosul.

Among the displaced are large numbers of women and children and UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies are providing assistance to the newly arrived families – including food, water, and other relief items such as stoves.

The numbers are fluid: many displaced individuals have managed to move onwards to Kirkuk and Baghdad Governorates, after being sponsored by friends or relatives. However, over two-thirds of the displaced have no such option and with a regular flow of new arrivals, the new camp at the stadium is urgently-needed.
UNHCR assessment mission to Al Wafaa transit camp

Baghdad, 27 April 2016 - UNHCR recently joined an inter-agency mission to Al Wafaa transit camp in Anbar Governorate to assess the humanitarian situation there, including camp management, shelter and protection issues. According to camp officials, 3,700 families originally from Heet, are staying at the site. They were forced to leave their homes as the Iraqi Security Forces continue a military offensive to retake the area from extremist groups. The camp population is fluid; with most families staying a few weeks and returning to their homes as soon as it is safe for them to do so. Problems reported include shortages of drinking water, medicines and food. New arrivals are reported to be sleeping in the open-air on mattresses, due to shortages of tents, while there is no electricity at the site, although some residents have access to small generators and charge other residents to use them, for example to charge mobile phones.

Although Al Wafaa is a transit camp, it is likely to remain in use for the foreseeable future. UNHCR has provided 750 kits of core relief items for newly arrived families.

UNHCR high level official visits Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 26 April 2016 - UNHCR's Director for the Middle East and North Africa Bureau, Amin Awad, met with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, to discuss the current humanitarian situation in the region.

Around 98% of Syrian refugees in Iraq are living in the Kurdistan region, in addition to more than one million Iraqis who have been displaced due to conflict. Mr. Awad acknowledged the ongoing generosity of the KR-I authorities in providing humanitarian assistance, despite the economic challenges the region is facing.

The two sides also discussed the importance of contingency plans and emergency preparedness, with large displacement of populations likely to continue as the government continues its military offensive to retake control of areas under extremist groups, including the city of Mosul.
Syrian Refugee Families in Erbil, Iraq get cash aid

Erbil, 28 April 2016 - On 27 April, 100 Syrian families living in host communities in Erbil Governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) received a one-off unconditional cash transfer to help them meet their most pressing needs, including food, shelter and healthcare. In total, 440 individuals benefited from this assistance. Each family received USD 150 (IQD 166,000). The 100 families were identified by IOM Iraq and the local government as among the most vulnerable. Funding was provided by USAID – the US Association for International Migration IOM’s non-profit partner in the United States – which collects individual contributions from US-based donors. Several of these families were displaced as early as 2012; half of the families are from the Kobani area in Syria.

“I will use 100 USD to pay back money I borrowed for my wife’s surgery and will keep 50 USD to cover my children’s daily expenses,” said Ramadhan Mustafa, who is providing for his 12-member family. “I earn between IQD 10,000 - 15,000 (USD 9-12) a day, which is hardly enough for our daily expenses.”

“After four or five years of displacement, the needs of Syrian refugees are changing and one of the most effective ways to respond is to provide them with cash. They know what they need and will use the money accordingly,” said Luca Dall’Oglio, CEO of USAID. “Giving cash allows refugees to spend on their priorities; this empowers them.”

Earlier this year, USAID funded a winter clothing distribution for more than 240 Syrian refugee children in the governorate of Erbil. IOM Iraq found that the winter clothing significantly contributed to the students’ classroom attendance and participation. As of 31 March 2016, a total of 246,123 Syrian refugees are living in Iraq. 47 percent are in Erbil governorate in the KRI. Erbil was prioritized for assistance as the governorate hosting the largest Syrian refugee population living outside camps (over 83,000 individuals), who often do not receive the same level of humanitarian assistance as those in camps.

IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Thomas Lothar Weiss said, “In cooperation with humanitarian partners, government representatives and donors, IOM Iraq identifies and provides assistance to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqis. Cash assistance provides displaced families with freedom of choice, to meet their own most urgent needs.”

To continue supporting USAID efforts to bring relief to Syrian refugees in Iraq, visit: http://usaim.org/assisting-syrian-families

WFP launches cash cards for displaced families and Syrian refugees

Baghdad, 28 April 2016 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has launched a digital cash card program to provide food assistance to thousands of displaced Iraqi families and Syrian refugees across Iraq.

Through electronic cards, known as SCOPE cards, WFP is providing both cash and voucher assistance to people in need, allowing them to choose and buy their own food from local shops across the country. The SCOPE system allows WFP to provide food assistance in a flexible manner to adapt to the rapidly changing situation in the country. It can be used to redeem cash or as an electronic voucher and in areas where food is not available in the market, it can be used to collect actual food from WFP distribution points. It also supports local Iraqi food retailers.

“This programme is a turning point in WFP’s food assistance operations in Iraq. We now use innovative technology to deliver a faster humanitarian response that is reliable, flexible and scalable,” said Jane Pearce, Representative and Country Director of WFP in Iraq.

Before receiving their SCOPE cards, individuals register their identification information and fingerprints into WFP’s database, which is electronically linked to the cards. Like a debit card, when the SCOPE card is swiped at a shop, it automatically connects to the database to confirm the individual’s identity, then the cost of the purchase is deducted from the total balance and recorded on a receipt.

“The SCOPE cards give displaced Iraqi families and Syrian refugees the assurance that they can access food when they need it. It also gives WFP valuable feedback on the types of food people are buying with the cards, which helps us better tailor our programmes to their needs,” Pearce added.

So far, WFP has distributed over 12,000 SCOPE cards to displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees in Iraq. By the end of 2016, WFP aims to reach over one million displaced Iraqis and over 72,000 Syrian refugees with SCOPE cards across the country.

The European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) funded the roll out of WFP’s SCOPE system as well as the pilot project in Akre, in the northern Kurdish region’s Duhok governorate, where thousands of displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees are sheltering. To date, ECHO has contributed almost US$32 million to Iraq for its food assistance programmes supporting displaced families and Syrian refugees.

Since January 2014, the conflict in Iraq has triggered mass waves of displacement of more than 3 million Iraqis. WFP is currently reaching 1.5 million displaced Iraqis and 70,000 Syrian refugees each month with food assistance.
Humanitarian situation

Inauguration of IDP shelter site in Al Amal Al Manshood under UN-Habitat project funded by the Government of Japan


The ceremony took place in the newly developed IDP shelter site delivered by UN-Habitat. The new IDP site was planned and equipped with durable prefabricated shelter units, basic infrastructure and public facilities. The compound will accommodate 100 displaced family who fled their homes in Anbar. Despite the efforts of the national government and local authorities in providing support to IDPs and returnees, the severe budget crises because of the decline in the oil prices and the cost of the war against ISIL with the influx of displaced persons in Baghdad Governorate, which has received more than 600,000 IDPs by March of this year.

The ceremony took place in the presence of H.E. Mr. Ali al-Tamimi, Governor of Baghdad, Head of Abo Ghrab District, Chairman of Provincial Council of anNasir waSalam sub-district, Representative of United Nations Human Settlements Programme, heads of Abo Ghrab clans and a group of displace families.

The Governor of Baghdad expressed his gratitude to UN-Habitat for their efforts in construction this shelter compound for IDPs which will offer huge support for the displaced persons in this District. He also called on all UN Agencies to support displaced persons while requesting UN-Habitat to construct an additional 150 shelter units in the same compound. The efforts of security forces in Abo Ghrab District in providing the protection and required facilitation for the compound to be accomplished in an appropriate manner, were also commended by the Governor of Baghdad.

Dr. Erfan Ali, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, asserted the continuation of UN-Habitat to work to alleviate the impact of displacement and support IDPs according to the good practices of UN-Habitat, which are based designing the shelter site according to the IDP families’ requirements, ensuring dignified living conditions and providing basic services.

Human rights

UN grants to Iraqi civil society organizations to assist females who suffered under ISIL

Erbil, 01 March 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq’s (UNAMI) Human Rights Office (HRO), with support from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Government of Canada, has provided US$180,000 in grants to eight civil society organisations that are working with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in internally displaced persons’ (IDP) camps and host communities in Iraq.

The funds will be used to assist in addressing the needs of women and girls who are amongst the most vulnerable groups affected by the conflict in Iraq and have particularly suffered at the hands of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since June 2014. ISIL elements captured thousands of women and girls and used them as sex slaves or sold them to others, especially women and girls from the Yezidi community. Some of the women and girls who managed to escape or have been rescued are now living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and they urgently require psychosocial and medical support in addition to other services.

Through grants amounting to a maximum of US$22,252 each, the eight NGOs working in KRI and Baghdad will be able to provide the much-needed support to survivors of sexual gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. Women and girls suffering from severe impairments due to traumatic stress related to violence will receive direct support and have improved access to psychosocial and medical care, as well as social and legal services. Additionally, through media campaigns, community dialogue forums and educational seminars implemented by these NGOs, society will gain a better understanding of the impact of sexual violence on the individual, families and the community, which will eventually contribute to decreasing the stigma related to the violations.

Furthermore, some of the grants will contribute to raising awareness among Iraqi police officers, as well as decision makers, on issues related to human rights and women rights to be actively involved in the protection and respect of the rights of displaced women and girls, to ensure their access to justice and to limit the impunity of perpetrators of sexual related violence in armed conflicts.
Iraq: Bold steps needed to give hope to ethnic and religious groups facing an uncertain future

Baghdad/Geneva, 8 March 2016 - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, today urged the Government of Iraq to take rapid and concrete steps to guarantee the future of some of the country’s most threatened and marginalized ethnic and religious groups who feel that their very existence in the country is threatened.

“Due to years of marginalization, conflict, ethnic and religious tensions, and recent terrorism, communities seem to have lost trust in each other and in the Government. This trust needs to be rebuilt in order to keep Iraq’s unique cultural heritage and diversity,” said the UN expert at the end of her first official visit* to the country from 27 February to 7 March 2016.

Ms. Izsák-Ndiaye visited Iraq in order to assess the situation of communities including the Baha’i, Christians, Faili Kurds, Kaka’i, Sabian Mandaeans, Shabak, Turkmen, Yezidis and Zoroastrians, who constitute minority or ‘component’ groups in the country. She visited Baghdad, Erbil and Dohuk, and their surroundings, including camps for internally displaced persons.

“While all communities have suffered in Iraq’s recent history and under the criminal brutality of ‘Daesh’ (ISIL), many smaller ethnic and religious groups have borne the brunt of violence and atrocities and thousands have been displaced from their homes. They feel vulnerable and abandoned and many are questioning their continued existence in the country,” she stated.

The Special Rapporteur spoke directly to community leaders who described the impact of violence and displacement on their communities. She listened to stories of starvation, humiliation and sexual violence of Yezidi women who had been held captive by ‘Daesh’.

“It is truly heartrending that in the cradle of civilization, in the 21st century, I hear testimonies of targeted killings, slavery, and of a marketplace selling and buying women for as much as the price of a pack of cigarettes,” Ms. Izsák-Ndiaye said. “The perpetrators must be brought to justice to bring the immense suffering of these vulnerable communities to an end.”

She urged concerted efforts to achieve the liberation of hundreds of women and girls still under captivity. She also stressed the need for the protection of mass graves and other evidence that may prove atrocity crimes, for which perpetrators should be tried by an appropriate court of law.

The UN expert acknowledged that the clear and immediate danger posed by ‘Daesh’ must be confronted as a high priority of the Government. However, she highlighted that for many minority groups the challenges that they face did not begin with it, and will not end with its defeat. “Long-standing societal discrimination and marginalization of ethnic and religious groups must be more comprehensively acknowledged and confronted,” the expert stated.

“A clear message must be sent to all of Iraq’s diverse communities that they do have a future in Iraq. That message must come in the form of legal, policy and institutional protection frameworks with immediate and concrete measures to ensure their security, dignity, rights and equality,” she underscored.

The Special Rapporteur voiced her concern for Shia and Sunni communities who find themselves in different locations where they are also under threat, displaced or face violation of their human rights.

Ms. Izsák-Ndiaye called for stronger measures to promote inclusion and social cohesion that has been damaged by recent violence and by years of historic marginalization of some groups on the grounds of their identity. “Efforts to forge a more inclusive government must include meaningful representation of smaller and historically marginalized ethnic and religious groups,” she said.

The Special Rapporteur expressed concern about insufficient international interest and dwindling resources to meet the immense needs in Iraq. She urged the international community to continue its support over the long-term and to give greater attention to the situation and needs of minorities, including support to humanitarian assistance, to achieve return, reconstruction, sustainable solutions and social cohesion.

The human rights expert, who visited the country at the invitation of the Iraqi authorities, thanked the Government of Iraq for its cooperation with her mandate.

Human rights training to strengthen capacity of Kurdistan Region's High Committee

Erbil, 10 March 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office (HRO) in Kurdistan Region conducted a specialised training course on “International Human Rights Mechanisms of Protection” for members of the High Committee to Evaluate and Respond to International Reports. The training focused on strengthening the skills of 18 members and the Secretariat of the High Committee, representatives of various governmental departments, including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in addition to representatives of the Judicial Council, the Integrity Commission, Erbil Governor’s Office, and security entities and Peshmerga.

This event comes as an important step in future activities aiming at empowering the technical and substantive role of the High Committee in Kurdistan Region.

The course included practical exercises based on the various experiences of international experts, United Nations international and national human rights staff members in international law. Trainers noted conventional and extra-conventional mechanisms of protection and their interaction with the High Committee, in particular the cycle of reporting and various communications of special procedures.

Dindar Zebari, Chairperson of the High Committee, highlighted at the opening session “the importance of the course in reinforcing the capacity of members of the High Committee in responding to international reports, and addressing human rights concerns and allegations to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights in Kurdistan Region”. Ms. Roueida El Hage, Head of the UNAMI Human Rights Office in Kurdistan Region, emphasised “the need for continuous cooperation with the High Committee to support its role in meeting international human rights obligations in Kurdistan Region”. Mr. Reda Abdelaziz, United Nations International Consultant explained the steps to be followed in drafting written responses by the High Committee, including reporting methodology.

Consultation roundtable on human rights for Ninewa Governorate stakeholders

Erbil, 20 March 2016 – The Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has conducted a two-day Consultation Roundtable for 30 participants from Ninewa Governorate, including Provincial Council members, tribal, ethnic and religious representatives, journalists, lawyers, judges, and human rights defenders.

The 11-12 March event aimed at highlighting the importance of monitoring skills of State entities, community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations in relation to human rights violations and abuses that have been committed in Ninewa Governorate. The discussion focused on fostering furthermore the coordination and cooperation in supporting the capacity of the stakeholders and duty bearers in Ninewa Governorate in verifying, documenting and reporting on human rights abuses and violations.

Topics also included priorities in working with HRO UNAMI and the importance of networking between State and civil society actors. National and international experts provided specialized presentations on verifying, documenting and report writing, in addition to an overview on Iraq’s obligations vis-à-vis international human rights law.

The roundtable is part of the ongoing cooperation of HRO UNAMI with Ninewa Governorate stakeholders, community representatives and civil society aiming at increasing their capacity in monitoring human rights, verifying and reporting on human rights abuses and violations.

Mr. Bachar Al-Kiki, Chairperson of the Provincial Council in Ninewa, commended the event’s outcome and noted that Ninewa stakeholders and duty bearers may have access to important accounts, but they need to be empowered to acquire the right skills to verify, document and report on human rights violations and abuses. He announced the decision by the Council to create the Committee to Document and Report Abuses and Violations Committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Ninewa Governorate.

Ms. Roueida El Hage, Chief of HRO UNAMI in Kurdistan Region, noted that monitoring allegations of human rights violations involve an important process of collecting, verifying and documenting facts while preserving principles of monitoring, including accuracy and precision, confidentiality, impartiality, credibility, and do-no-harm to victims or sources. She noted that well-handled human rights information is essential to establish accountability and fight impunity in relation to serious crimes committed in Iraq.
Training course for trainers on human rights organized in Erbil

Erbil, 20 March 2016 – UNAMI Human Rights office in the Kurdistan Region hold training course for trainers on human rights subject from 13 to 17 March 2016, aimed to support the capacity of participants on preparation and presentation of human rights trainings.

Training lasted five days for more than fifty hours on multiple sessions, a diverse participatory training techniques were used, which covered all training topics about human rights, effective and basic skills for coaches in order to communicate effectively, how the training requirement based on an analysis multiple mechanisms to ensure good planning and preparation of training materials to meet this need.

The program addressed means of good preparation for training. At the end each participant gave an experimental presentation for the rest of the trainees and underwent a collective evaluation by experts. It was a big challenge for participants to perform specialized training in human rights field on the other hand it was a big success that law enforcement officers, representatives of the independent Human Rights Commission, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations to provide training sessions for the first time for some of them in human rights and other different subjects.

Representatives from the Police Academy and the Violence Against Women Unit at the Ministry of Interior, Asayish unit, Human Rights Commissioners in addition to representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in training, while the closing session was attended by Brigadier Honer Hamad, head of the Training Unit of the Ministry of Interior in Kurdistan, who stressed the importance of the program in supporting the officers capabilities to do their work according to human rights standards.

The Director of the UNAMI Human Rights Office in KR, Ms. Rueda Haj said that the carried out training sessions will be benefited from their outputs directly by the involvement of graduates in the trainings that will be carried out by the office in accordance with the annual plan, to be under the supervision of specialists to achieve the goal of enabling Trainers in Kurdistan Region Kurdish language to maximize the benefit of their unique capabilities.

The international expert Prof. Reda Abdel Aziz stressed the importance of the empowerment of new trainers in Kurdistan Region to conduct trainings in Kurdish language to optimize the distinctive abilities of trainers.

The training sessions covered various topics including: the right to physical integrity and protection from torture, violence against women, the rights of internally displaced persons, the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Participants were also lectured on the importance of monitoring and documentation, the right to privacy, the legal description of the crime of Halabja, among other topics. The participants Mr. Ismat Mohammed Ali Hassan, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and the commander of the training unite of the police academy in Erbil, presented the subject of extrajudicial killings in international human rights law explaining the subject within the modern training framework, stressing advantage of the training curriculum received in the training session.

Roundtable discussion for Kurdistan Region Parliamentarians on promoting and protecting human rights

Erbil, 12 April 2016 – The Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) conducted a one-day roundtable discussion for Members of Parliament of the Kurdistan Region on promoting and protecting human rights.

Fifteen Parliamentarians representing three committees - Human Rights, Legal and Defending Women Rights - discussed law-making, oversight and representation functions of Parliament as well as the importance of human rights-based approach in fulfilling these roles.

Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, Mr. Jaafar Eminki, and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political, Electoral & Constitutional Affairs, Mr. Gyorgy Busztin, opened the event, emphasizing that the Parliament has a crucial role in promoting, protecting and realizing human rights through law-making, oversight, and representative functions. They highlighted that Parliamentarians can demonstrate the key tenets of democratic governance, and the universal principles that underpin human rights through the exercise of inclusive participation, accountability to citizens, and influencing good functioning of institutions to ensure democracy, rule of law and human rights.

“The law-making process should ensure that human rights values and principles are given due consideration,” stated Mr. Busztin. He added: “This requires analyzing laws with a view to ensuring that they comply with international human rights standards, mainly through the very important role of the main parliamentary committees”. Participants debated a number of human rights challenges in Kurdistan Region, including legislative, institutional and operational reforms. They emphasized the need for Parliament to empower people, represent their voice, and fulfill their needs through passing laws and overseeing executive action.
Baghdad, April 2016 - The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore, met on 17 April 2016, with the Chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, Mr. Arshid al Salehi. During the discussion, Mr. al Salehi briefed the Deputy High Commissioner about the human rights and rule of law challenges that Iraq is facing as well as actions that his Committee is undertaking to address these challenges. He noted that his Committee is working actively on monitoring the human rights situation throughout Iraq, as well as on a number of new laws that are intended to enhance the respect for the rights of all Iraq’s people, including a human rights law, an anti-discrimination law, a law to protect the rights of diverse ethnic and religious communities, and a freedom of information and expression law.

Continuing her official visit to Iraq, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore, met separately in Baghdad on 18 April 2016 with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, as well as representatives of Iraq’s diverse religious and ethnic communities, as well as human rights activists representing women and people with disabilities.

The Minister informed Ms. Gilmore that Iraqi civilians are being subjected to serious human rights violations on a daily basis at the hands of ISIL (Daesh), while many continue to suffer from the crimes committed by the former regime. The Minister called for greater action by the international community to ensure the accountability for the perpetrators of these crimes and for greater support for the Government and people of Iraq to defeat the Daesh and to ensure justice for the victims.

Representatives from the Sunni community discussed ways of ensuring their voices will be heard in community and national reconciliation processes. Representatives of the Christian, Turkmen, and Shabak communities, emphasised the importance of providing assistance to the victims of human rights violations, the need to ensure that those who have been displaced can return to their homes in safety and dignity, and the need for policies to be implemented that will ensure the respect for their rights and provide them with economic and physical security for the future so as to stem the continuing flow of members of their communities from Iraq.

Members representing women’s organisations stressed the need for legislation and policies to combat violence against women and to ensure women’s full and equal participation in the political and economic life of Iraq.

Representatives of people with disabilities highlighted the discrimination and hardships they face in their daily lives accessing basic services that are available and accessible to other Iraqi citizens, as well as noting the disproportionate impact that armed conflict and violence is having on members of their community.

Ms. Gilmore expressed her sincere compassion for the people of Iraq for the suffering they have endured from decades of human rights violations – but stressed the importance for the Iraqi people not to focus solely on the tragedy of the past – but also to consider what actions may be taken to address ongoing human rights violations, assure accountability, and to promote the respect for the rule of law and the rights of all of Iraq’s people without discrimination as the best means to ensure a prosperous, peaceful and inclusive future for the country.

“Memory is long, but vision can be short”, Ms. Gilmore said. “The Iraqi people have truly suffered from horrendous human rights violations and abuses that are almost unparalleled. However, for Iraq to move forward, it is essential that all Iraq’s people, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or other distinctions, are involved in a dialogue to agree on ways that true community reconciliation to build a lasting peace can be achieved. This path will not be easy, but there must be care and support for the survivors of violations and other vulnerable or marginalised groups, accountability for the perpetrators of crimes, and dialogue to build a common vision that is inclusive of all Iraq’s people and that promotes human rights and respect for the rule of law for the equal benefit of all Iraqis. This will be the best guarantee for a stable and prosperous future for all Iraq’s people, irrespective of their differences.”
UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore visits Erbil

Erbil, 20 April 2016 – Today, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore, travelled to Erbil where she met with members of the Provincial Council of Ninewa Governorate and representatives of various ethnic and religious communities from the Kurdistan Region (KR) Ministry of Religious Endowment.

The Ninewa Provincial Council delegation was headed by Provincial Council Chairperson, Mr. Bachar al-Kiki, and consisted of a range of ethnic and religious community representatives, including the Christian, Shabak, and Yezidi. They related to Ms. Gilmore the suffering of their people at the hands of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the needs of IDPs, and the urgent need to ensure that people returning to their places of origin are able to access basic services. They called on international assistance to help rebuild their homes and livelihoods that have been destroyed by ISIL and to ensure the accountability of the perpetrators of crimes committed against their communities and justice of the victims.

The representatives of the KR Ministry of Religious Endowment, encompassing a number of religious faiths, including Sabaean Mandaean, Christian, Jewish, Baha’i, and Zoroastrian, related to the Deputy High Commissioner the discrimination they have faced over decades – and the terrible toll that the actions of ISIL had taken on them, including the loss of lives, sexual and other forms of violence, destruction of their properties and wanton destruction of their places of religious and cultural significance. However, she also praised the resilience of their communities in face of such atrocities. She expressed the full support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist them in claiming their rights and in restoring and protecting their communities from the effects of human rights violations and abuses, and in developing strategies for ensuring their protection and their full and equal participation in the political, economic, and social life of Iraq.

In relation to ensuring justice for their communities, the Deputy High Commissioner said, “It is essential that we document and denounce the human rights violations that have taken place and continue to take place, not only so that we don’t remain silent in the face of what has happened but to preserve the basis for justice for the victims of gross human rights violations that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It is simply essential that we prepare the way for ensuring accountability for those crimes.”

She noted that this is why the High Commissioner for Human Rights had repeatedly called on the Government of Iraq to take steps to ensure that Iraqi courts have appropriate jurisdiction over international crimes (including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide) but that it also consider becoming a signatory to the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In pledging the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious communities to claim their rights, ensure their protection, and assist their return and recovery to their places of origin following the devastation inflicted on them by ISIL, Ms. Gilmore praised the action taken by members of their communities to stand up for human rights. “To be heartbroken by the suffering of the people of Iraq, by the unconscionable toll that violence has exacted on so many children, women and men – that is compassion. But when the consequences of those atrocities are also met with a vision beyond them, a future vision of justice, peace and of reconciliation - that is courageous and priceless. We honour you as members and representatives of your communities for your courageous work to put that vision into action”, the Deputy High Commissioner stated.
DHC Gilmore praises Kurdistan’s cooperation on human rights issues as well as economic and social development progress

Erbil, 21 April 2016 - The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore, met on Thursday, 21 April 2016, with the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Masoud Barzani, at his official residence in Salahidin. President Barzani informed Ms. Gilmore that he greatly welcomed the work of the United Nations Human Rights Office in the Kurdistan Region and he affirmed his government’s commitment to human rights. He noted that the Kurdish people and minority ethnic and religious communities had suffered greatly from decades of violence and human rights violations, including the atrocities committed against them by Saddam Hussein, and now from those being perpetrated at the hands of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIL). Despite scarce resources, the Kurdistan Region has welcomed over two million people displaced from other areas of Iraq who are being supported largely by the Kurdish people themselves. The President also informed the Deputy High Commissioner that he had given specific instructions to the Kurdish Region of Iraq’s Peshmerga forces to protect civilians when carrying out military operations to liberate areas from ISIL. He called on the international community to do more to ensure humanitarian assistance for the displaced. He also pledged the full support of his office to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in carrying out its mandate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Ms. Gilmore thanked the President for his leadership on human rights issues, and the support and cooperation he had shown to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in promoting the respect and protection of human rights in the Kurdistan Region. She noted that the Kurdish people had made great progress in terms of economic and social development, despite their terrible history, and had made significant gains in ensuring the respect for the rule of law and the protection of human rights in the Kurdistan Region.

“By air, it is but a short journey from Baghdad to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, but a great distance between the two in terms of people’s access to peace and security, and in the respect and protection of their human rights and the rule of law. The commitment of the people of Kurdistan to advancing the respect and protection of human rights is evidenced by the many advances they have made, particularly in relation to the rights of women, of children and of people with disabilities. The generosity they have shown to people from all backgrounds who are fleeing the effects of violence, conflict and gross human rights abuses is exceptional”, Ms. Gilmore said.

The Deputy High Commissioner also met with the Deputy Secretary-General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Dr. Barham Salih.

"It is absolutely critical that the people of Iraq start to plan for the ‘day after’ ISIL now," the Deputy High Commissioner stated. "A future oriented dialogue among all communities within Iraq is needed now, not only to pave the way to justice for the victims of the gross human rights violations and abuses to which the peoples of Iraq have been subjected, but to forge a framework of understanding on which trust can be rebuilt and full respect and protection for the rights of Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious communities can be secured. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will do all it can to support such dialogue – among individuals and communities at the local and national levels - as the best foundation for an inclusive, prosperous and peaceful future for all the peoples of Iraq”.

DHC Gilmore visits Najaf, meets leaders, attends workshop

Najaf, 19 April 2016 - The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore, travelled on today to Najaf, where she met with senior religious figures, civic leaders, and civil society organisations. Ms. Gilmore was honoured to be received by His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayid Mohamed Sa’eed al-Hakim. Ms. Gilmore learned of a saying of the Imam Ali, that "All human beings are born as brothers in religion or brothers in humanity" which serves as the basis for ensuring respect, equality and justice among all people irrespective of their differences. His Eminence stated that despite the suffering of the people of Iraq from decades of human rights violations inflicted by the former regime of Saddam Hussein, through years of terrorism, and at the present time from ISIL, the principles of Islam and Imam Ali, of tolerance, compassion, forgiveness and justice, continued to be applied in practice. He noted that hundreds of thousands of men women and children from different religious and ethnic backgrounds had sought refuge in Najaf from the crimes inflicted on them by the Daesh (ISIL), and that the people of Najaf had provided them protection and assistance without distinction and irrespective of their backgrounds. His Eminence called on the United Nations to ensure that more is done to ensure the care and protection for IDPs, and that human rights violations in Iraq are properly and fairly documented in order to ensure accountability of the perpetrators and justice for the victims. He also urged the Office of the High Commissioner to continue its work with all levels of society to promote the respect and protection of human rights.
Equality and justice ‘not luxuries’ but crucial foundations of Iraq’s stability – deputy UN rights chief

Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore briefs the press in Geneva on her week-long mission to Baghdad, Najaf, Erbil and Dohuk IDP camps in Iraq

Geneva, 25 April 2016 – Iraq must immediately take concrete steps to plan for “the day after” the defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a senior United Nations human rights official urged today, calling for measures grounded in equality, the rule of law and a vision that has earned the confidence of all the country’s diverse communities.

“Iraq, it seems, has a long memory but is short on vision,” UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate Gilmore, said at the end of a week-long visit to the crisis-gripped country.

“It is like a vehicle travelling over rocky terrain, with a large rear view mirror but only a keyhole for a windscreen, despite a vicious contest for the wheel. The dominant narrative among many of Iraq’s leaders is of ‘my community’s grievance,’ failing to acknowledge the widespread nature of Iraqis’ suffering and failing to chart a course for an inclusive future.”

She added that Iraqis are “crying out for fairness, recognition, justice, appreciation and meaningful participation in shaping their future – a process that goes forward and not backwards.”

“All the leaders of Iraq, at every level, in both word and action, need to demonstrate a far greater commitment to peace, equality and to the rule of law than to grievances or to vengeance hardwired by sectarianism. There is a worrying absence of a political narrative that brings together all the diverse communities in Iraq, a narrative that includes all the minority communities. This must be urgently addressed,” she warned.

‘Future is not solely a matter of defeating ISIL’

Ms. Gilmore stressed that Iraq’s challenges are not military alone and its future is not solely a matter of defeating ISIL and liberating its territories.

“The existence of armed conflict in certain regions does not excuse or justify the absence of the rule of law in the broader Iraq. Judicial independence, an end to arbitrary detentions, respect for due process, the prohibition of torture – these are neither ideals nor luxuries, but are indispensable foundations of stability,” she said.

“Firm steps must be taken – now – to plan for the day after ISIL, steps that broaden inclusion and deepen fairness, including through structured local, regional and national dialogue on inclusion, peaceful co-existence and mutual respect,” she continued.

Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore (left) meets with the Chair of Iraq’s Parliamentary Human Rights Committee Arshid al Salehi. Photo: UN Iraq

“Unchecked corruption, lack of accountability for past and present crimes, the problem of tribal militias, the growing number of internally displaced people, the partial or total destruction of entire villages and towns, violence against women, and the need for constitutional and legislative reforms are some of the many pressing human rights concerns in Iraq that need priority attention,” she stressed.

Abuses perpetrated by ISIL ‘must neither be forgotten, nor silenced’

During her mission to Iraq, Ms. Gilmore visited Baghdad, Najaf, Erbil and the Shariya camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Dohuk. She met the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other senior Government officials, as well as the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, leaders of civil society, including religious and ethnic communities, human rights defenders, and survivors of human rights violations.

“The blight of ISIL was made tragically clear by the stories of survivors of violations that we met in IDP camps in Dohuk. The Yezidi man who was forcibly convicted, subjected to mock executions and who witnessed a pregnant woman stoned to death; the woman who was subjected to sexual slavery for more than a year; the man whose entire family – wife, daughters, son – were abducted by ISIL and who couldn’t afford the $30,000 ransom demanded for their release,” Ms. Gilmore recounted, in an emotional statement.

“The human rights abuses being perpetrated by ISIL must neither be forgotten, nor silenced. The right to truth is crucial, as is the possibility of accountability for those who have committed what may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or even genocide. Evidence must be preserved and testimony must continue to be gathered,” he insisted.

The Deputy High Commissioner also urged the international community to provide more support to humanitarian needs, the rebuilding of essential infrastructure and towards justice and reconciliation in Iraq.

“We all have responsibilities towards the people of Iraq. While there is an international military coalition in place, a comparably resourced international coalition of practical compassion is also needed to help with the building blocks towards a sustained peace in Iraq,” she said.
Panel discussion on protecting Iraq’s minority communities

Washington, D.C., 21 April 2016 - On 21 April, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, took part in a panel discussion on the atrocities ISIL/Daesh committed against minority communities as the terrorist group marched across northern Iraq in 2014. The event was held at the Newseum, in Washington, D.C., and revolved around the report, “Our Generation is Gone: The Islamic State’s Targeting of Iraqi Minorities in Nineveh”, from the Simon-Skjodt Center of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Mr. Feltman highlighted UN action to support the communities affected by the violence and listed a number of recommendations for the Iraqi Government and the international community.

Here are some of his main points.

A 2014 United Nations Human Rights Council fact-finding mission concluded that, subject to a determination by an independent and competent court, members of ISIL “may have perpetrated” genocide and “may have committed” crimes against humanity and war crimes in northern Iraq.

ISIL is still holding approximately 3,500 women, children and some men, mostly Yezidi but also members of other ethnic and religious communities, such as Turkmen, Shabak and Mandean. These captives continue to be subjected to sexual and other physical forms of violence on a daily basis.

Continuing risk to ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East

ISIL’s violence affects all people in Iraq, from all Iraqi communities, and risks exacerbating even further the Sunni-Shia divide and existing tensions.

ISIL continues to terrorize ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and in other parts of the Middle East.

The suffering of ISIL’s victims does not always end when they escape the group’s control. Many are experiencing poor access to services, such as shelter, health and education, as well as prolonged displacement with no prospects of return to their areas of origin in the foreseeable future. Women and children subjected to sexual violence, slavery and torture remain deeply traumatized, with limited access to psychosocial and medical services. Jobs and ways to make a living remain extremely limited, particularly in light of the current severe economic and fiscal crisis in Iraq.

Inter-communal relations are also strained in many liberated areas of Iraq, where ethno-sectarian conflict had made coexistence uneasy even before ISIL’s occupation. Deep mistrust among some communities, owing to deep-rooted discrimination, has made the return of people displaced by ISIL to their areas of origin more difficult, and even triggered violent clashes. The threat to Iraq’s minorities thus extends beyond ISIL’s terrorism and mass atrocities. Inter-communal violence is tearing apart Iraq’s social fabric.

Confronting recent atrocities and preventing future ones

The fight against violent extremism in Iraq is essential. But there must also be a substantial effort towards prevention. To this end, addressing structural discrimination against minorities and other Iraqi communities and promoting trust-building has never been more critical.

There also has to be a genuine and inclusive reconciliation process at all levels of Iraqi society to restore trust and rebuild ties among Iraqis. Just as importantly, there must be accountability for the crimes that have been committed against these minorities. The Government of Iraq has the main responsibility for ensuring accountability. It can grant its courts specific jurisdiction over international crimes and revive the Iraqi High Tribunal without the temporal limitation to its jurisdiction. Iraq should also be encouraged to consider becoming a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The UN has already engaged in addressing some of these priorities, particularly those related to providing protection and assistance to the survivors of ISIL’s violence and their families in Iraq. Most of these survivors belong to minority communities. In 2015, UN agencies provided psychosocial and medical support services, as well as transportation facilities across Iraq to over 125,000 women and girls from minority communities affected by sexual violence in conflict. UNFPA, UNHCR and UN Women have also collaborated to provide capacity-building programs for service providers in the areas of reproductive health services, trauma counselling, reintegration support and the clinical management of rape. However, these efforts remain inadequate in facing the severe shortage of services and adequately-trained personnel.

As a result of competing priorities in the region, Iraq’s humanitarian crisis continues to receive insufficient global attention and support; it is grossly underfunded. The UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq is not nearly adequately funded.

The Department of Political Affairs has focused on how best to protect and promote diversity and pluralism in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria. DPA has allocated resources to implement, in close partnership with the political UN mission in Iraq, UNAMI, a project to support the reintegration into their communities of minority women and girls who have survived ISIL’s violence.

Access the full report at: http://bit.ly/1UqXfU
Training in Dohuk on strengthening human rights monitoring and documentation skills


The 24-26 April training course, entitled “Strengthening Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Skills”, is part of a series of activities that the Human Rights Office is providing in order to support national institutions and civil society actors in protecting, promoting, and fulfilling human rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The training course focused on deepening participants’ understanding of key principles and legal frameworks, such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as well as on sharpening core skills, including fact-finding missions, interviewing, and report-writing skills. Sessions were provided by United Nations human rights professionals, as well as three members of IBHR, two of whom had benefited from earlier training of trainers provided by UNAMI Human Rights Office.

Participants noted the benefit of concentrating on key human rights competencies. Mr. Diler Hassan, Head of the IBHR Dohuk Office, stated that the training was “important because monitoring and documentation are fundamental tasks of human rights institutions.” Mr. Hassan called on UNAMI to provide additional training in Dohuk Governorate.

Talks on the state of human rights in the Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 26 April 2016 – Mr. Falah Mustafa, Head of Foreign Relations Department of the Kurdistan Regional Government received today Mr. Francesco Motta, Director of the UNAMI Human Rights Office, accompanied by Ms. Roueida El Hage, Head of the Human Rights Office in Erbil, with whom he discussed the state of human rights in the Kurdistan Region and ways of possible cooperation.

UNAMI expresses concern over Iraqi decision to close Al Jazeera offices in Baghdad

Baghdad, 28 April 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) expresses concern over the decision by the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission ordering the closure of the offices of the Al Jazeera satellite news network in Baghdad. While fully respecting the prerogatives of the Commission, at times of crisis a free media – even if opinions are contested, rejected or disliked – becomes even more essential to safeguard the public interest and protect democracy. UNAMI expresses its expectation that the amendment of this decision will be made possible at the earliest convenience.
Political consultations

Iraq, March–April 2016 - During March and April political leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) engaged in a very dynamic process of political consultations with major stakeholders in Baghdad and Erbil. Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, and Deputy Special Representative for political and electoral affairs, Gyorgy Busztin, discussed the political situation in the country and proposals to end the current crisis. Fight against ISIS, humanitarian, security and political issues, the return of internally displaced persons to liberated areas, international assistance for rehabilitation and reconstruction of liberated areas as well as the status of the reforms process were also discussed.

Baghdad, 03 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq Mr. Ján Kubiš, with the president of the State of Law coalition Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki.

Baghdad, 22 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, with Ms. Hanaa Edwaa, a human rights and women’s rights activist, the co-founder and Chair of Iraq Al-Amal Association and member of the Civil Initiative. Ms. Edwaa is also the co-founder of the Iraqi Women’s Network, an NGO focusing on women’s rights.

Baghdad, 03 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, with Sayyid Amar al-Hakeem, Chairman of the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq.

Baghdad, 14 March 2016 - SRSG Jan Kubis with His Excellency President of Iraq, Fuad Masum.

Baghdad, 30 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, with Mr. Hisham al-Hashemi, Secretary General of Fadilah Bloc, and MP Ammar Tohmeh, Head of the Fadilah Parliamentary Bloc.

Erbil, 15 March 2016 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Gyorgy Busztin, with Hemin Hawrami, Head of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).
Baghdad, 15 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, with Iyad Allawi, Head of Wataniya bloc.

Baghdad, 23 March 2016 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with the Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR), Mr. Salim al-Jabouri.

Baghdad, 24 March 2016 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with the Iraqi Minister of Interior, Mr. Mohammed Salem Al-Ghabban.

Baghdad, 29 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Dhia al-Asadi, Head of Ahrar bloc in the Council of Representatives.

Baghdad, 24 March 2016 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Mr. Hisham al Hashemi, Secretary General of Fadilah Bloc, and MP Ammar Tohmeh, Head of the Fadilah Parliamentary Bloc.

Baghdad, 29 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Hussein Al-Shahristani, Iraq's Minister of Higher Education.
Baghdad, 30 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Mr. Hisham al Hashemi, Secretary General of Fadilah Bloc, and MP Ammar Tohmeh, Head of the Fadilah Parliamentary Bloc.

Baghdad, 30 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Dr. Khudeir Al-Khuzaee, Head of Dawa-Iraq Organisation.

Baghdad, 31 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with His Excellency, Fuad Masoum, President of the Republic of Iraq.

Baghdad, 3 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Dr. Hanan Al Fatlawi, MP and member of Foreign Affairs Committee.

Baghdad, 4 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš with Dr. Dhia Al-Asadi, Head of the Ahrar Bloc in the Council of Representatives (CoR).

Baghdad, 4 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš with MP Ms. Ala Talabani (PUK).

Baghdad, 4 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, with Mr. Ahmed al-Maari, Head of the Iraqi Forces Coalition Parliamentary Bloc.
Baghdad, 4 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš with His Eminence Ammar Al-Hakim, Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI).

Baghdad, 7 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Ibrahim Al-Jaafari.

Baghdad, 7 April 2016 - Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Multilateral Affairs, Omar Barzanji with the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Iraq, Gyorgy Busztin.

Baghdad, 19 April 2016 - Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Jan Kubis with H.E. Ayad Allawi, Head of the Wataniya Coalition.

Baghdad, 19 April 2016 - Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Jan Kubis with the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Fuad Masoum.

Baghdad, 20 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubis with the former Vice President Osama al-Nujaifi.

Baghdad, 20 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubis with the head of the parliamentary Al-Ahrar Bloc Dhiaa Al-Asadi.
Baghdad, 20 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš with H.E. Hussein al-Shahristani, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Baghdad, 21 April 2016 - SRSG Kubiš with Mr. Hushyar Zebari, Minister of Finance.

Baghdad, 21 April 2016 - SRSG Kubiš with Mr. Ahmed Msari, Head of the Iraqi Forces Coalition.

Baghdad, 25 April 2016 – Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ján Kubiš with President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Fuad Massum.

Baghdad, 21 April 2016 - SRSG Kubiš with Dr. Saleh Al-Mutlaq, Chairman of the Arabiya Coalition and former Deputy Prime Minister.

Baghdad, 21 April 2016— SRSG Kubiš with Dr. Saleh Al-Mutlaq, Chairman of the Arabiya Coalition and former Deputy Prime Minister.

Baghdad, 21 April 2016— SRSG Kubiš with H.E. Salim Al-Jubouri, Speaker of the Council of Representatives.

Baghdad, 21 April 2016 — SRSG Kubiš with Mr. Ali Adooh, Head of the State of Law Bloc in the Parliament.

Baghdad, 27 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, attended a dinner along with ambassadors of the leading industrialized countries (G7) and the European Union Representative in Iraq that was hosted by Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi on Wednesday, 27 April 2016. The meeting discussed the political, economic, humanitarian, military and security developments in the country, and the Prime Minister’s proposed reforms. SRSG Kubiš and the Ambassadors reiterated the support of the international community to Iraq in coping with the current financial and economic challenges and in its war against terrorism.
Civil society role vital for the success of community and national reconciliation

Baghdad, 12 March 2016 – Over 100 representatives from civil society organizations, including organizations focusing on women's empowerment and youth, participated today in a conference on “The Establishment of the Civil Peace and Social coexistence Network” to discuss how to promote the active engagement of civil society in political and community reconciliation and in combating ethno-sectarian and area-based segregation, and their contribution towards advancing national reconciliation and social peace.

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq Gyorgy Busztin welcomed the participants by acknowledging “the crucial role of the civil society in creating an enabling environment to promote and consolidate the values of reconciliation in the society and emphasizing the United Nations’ continuous support for Iraqi efforts to achieve community and national reconciliation”. DSRSG also took the opportunity to commend the re-establishment of the Office of Women Affairs in the National Reconciliation Commission adding that it will be a vehicle to facilitate the participation of women in advancing the reconciliation process in line with the commitment contained in the National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325.

“It is my firm belief that reconciliation will take on a more vital dimension through the full participation of civil society and their involvement in initiatives that respond to the challenges posed by the complex realities in Iraq. Based on our recent engagement with civil society, working at the local level will bring added-value, notably in post-ISIL areas where conflict, humanitarian tragedy and displacement issues need urgently to be addressed” said DSRSG Busztin.

In his remarks, Prime Minister’s Advisor for National Reconciliation Affairs, Mr. Mohammed Salman al-Saadi, underscored the strategic role of civil society organizations in advancing an inclusive and acceptable national reconciliation process.

The conference was jointly organized by the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation—Prime Minister’s Office and UNAMI, with the support of UNOPS, and the generous contribution of the German and Dutch Governments.

UNAMI co-organizes Ekrkov Festival to strengthen civil society engagement in community reconciliation

Baghdad, 21 March 2016 – UNAMI, in collaboration with the National Reconciliation Committee of the Prime Minister’s Office and the Shams Al-Hayat Foundation for Human Rights, organized on Monday a festival to strengthen the engagement of civil society in community reconciliation, as well as to celebrate peaceful co-existence and Iraqi unity.

The event – dubbed Ekrkov Festival and held at the UNESCO Heritage Site of Agar-Guf at Abu Ghraib in Baghdad province – also highlighted the value of cultural heritage and archaeological sites, and urged government attention to preserve them.

Participants included Government officials, Members of Parliament, representatives from the National Reconciliation Commission and civil society organizations and activists, artists, poets, academics, students and children of internally displaced people (IDPs) from Anbar, Diyala, the Ninewa Plains and Sinjar.

In his speech, UNAMI Director of Political Affairs Marwan Ali said Iraq is a country rich in history and culture and home to the world’s oldest civilizations. Highlighting that “stability in Iraq means a stable region,” Mr. Ali warned of evil powers trying to destroy the unity of Iraq.

Mr. Ali urged Iraqis to unite against ISIL and fight extremism. He reminded that Iraqis of all sects and religious and ethnic groups have co-existed peacefully for years, and stressed that the mosaic of Iraq should be preserved. He assured of UNAMI commitment to supporting the government of Iraq in its efforts to advance national and community reconciliation.

Hussein Al-Adery, the Advisor to the National Reconciliation Committee of the Prime Minister’s Office, also urged Iraqis to unite. He emphasized that the first day of spring opens a new chapter and Iraqis should reevaluate the divisions and scars caused by ISIL.

Mr. Al-Adery urged civil society to play a larger role in community reconciliation, reminding that they preserve Iraq’s diversity which, he emphasized, should not be a source of division but of unity. Diversity, he added, means pluralism and coexistence. He denounced those who spread messages of hatred and sectarian divide, and appealed for tolerance. He also urged the government to purge corrupt officials and create employment opportunities for the youth. He criticized foreign powers seeking to divide Iraq.

The occasion was symbolic and featured several activities, among them a drama performance by IDP children from Mosul and Anbar. Poets from Baghdad, Anbar, Basra, Ramadi, Sinjar and Erbil also recited poetry side by side as a symbol of unity.
UNAMI Office of Political Affairs’ visit to representatives of the Demonstrations Coordination Committee

Baghdad, 23 March 2016 · UNAMI’s Office of Political Affairs visited on Tuesday 22 March 2016 the representatives of the Demonstrations Coordination Committee and also met MP Hakem al-Zameli, who serves as the Chairman of the Security and Defence Committee in the Council of Representatives. The Coordination Committee representatives elaborated on their commitment to hold peaceful and organized demonstrations. They discussed their close coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces to ensure the safety of those taking part in the sit-ins and in taking measures to ensure that movement around the area of the sit-ins remains accessible.

The UNAMI Delegation was headed by the Director of the Office of Political Affairs, Mr. Marwan Ali, who thanked the Coordination Committee for the invitation to visit the site of the demonstrations, and further commended the level of organization that they have displayed. Mr. Ali further expressed UNAMI’s readiness to continue supporting efforts to move forward in the reform process.

The demonstrations representatives expressed their appreciation for UN efforts in Iraq and responded positively to UNAMI’s request committing to ensure the unimpeded access by UN and international community staff to the area.

SRSG Kubiš meets Board of Commissioners of IHEC

Baghdad, 24 April 2016 · The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ján Kubiš with members of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for Iraq and discussed the work of IHEC, support of the United Nations and the wider international community to the commission. The members briefed on the preparations for the forthcoming 2017 provincial council and 2018 parliamentary elections. The meeting also discussed the current political and security situation in the country.

UNAMI “Devolution as Part of National Reconciliation” workshops in Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan and Basra Governorates

Baghdad, 07 April 2016 · From 31 March to 5 April 2016, the Office of Political Affairs (OPA) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a series of Governorate-level consultations on the theme “Devolution as part of National Reconciliation” in Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan and Basra governorates.

These consultations are a follow-up to the national conference held in September 2015 in Baghdad and were aimed at soliciting views on expectations from devolution, and potential solutions to overcome challenges during the implementation of the devolution of powers in the governorates.

Civil Society representatives, Participants outlined a number of concerns as well as ideas that will be shared by UNAMI with the Government of Iraq in support of the Decentralization process. The consultations are being organized as part of UNAMI’s project, “Supporting the Council of Representatives in Enacting Key Legislation and promoting national co-existence”, which is funded by Germany and Netherlands. OPA will continue the governorate-level consultations in other governorates across Iraq.
UN calls for dialogue among Iraqi leaders to resolve political crisis, offers Good Offices

Baghdad, 15 April 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is deeply concerned about the ongoing political crisis in the country and calls on Iraq's leaders to engage in constructive dialogue to resolve their differences.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Acting Head of UNAMI, Gyorgy Busztin, said the crisis is threatening to paralyse State institutions and weaken national unity at a time when all efforts should focus on combatting Daesh, implementing reforms, reviving the economy and re-energizing the performance of the State.

"The only party that benefits from the political divisions and chaos as well as the weakening of the State and its institutions is Daesh. We should not allow this to happen," he said.

He added that Iraq is going through a challenging period in its history. "It is important that Iraq's elected representatives and political leadership now engage in a process of dialogue to find solutions based on principles of democracy and legality."

Mr. Busztin added: "These solutions must ensure Iraq's political stability while enabling progress in reforms that the people of Iraq have called for and duly deserve. It is critical that all political efforts at this juncture should be such that they strengthen the unity of Iraq's people in fighting the terrorist and criminal gangs of Daesh".

The DSRSG warned that political differences should not be allowed to be interpreted in sectarian terms. "The process of reforms should be one that brings Iraq's political actors together, not one that divides them."

SRSG Kubiš urges resumption of the work of the Council of Representatives

Baghdad, 20 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, expresses his appreciation of the efforts of Iraq's constitutional and political leaders and forces, including members and leadership of the Council of Representatives (CoR), in choosing political solutions over confrontation in the search for democratic and legal ways to end the standoff in the Council of Representatives in a spirit of national responsibility.

Intensive political consultations resulted today in an important move that has created an opportunity for a speedy resumption of the work of the unified Council of Representatives to pave the way for the reorganization of the government and implementation of profound political, security and economic reforms, as well as anti-corruption measures that the people, civil society and political forces outside and inside the Council of Representatives have been demanding for many months.

"Political crisis and deadlock in the way of the reform agenda are threatening to paralyse the State and its institutions, weaken national unity at a time the country faces mounting complex security, economic and social challenges and seeks critically needed support from the international community. Crisis and chaos only serve the interest of the enemies of Iraq, first and foremost the terrorist and criminal gangs of Daesh who still control parts of the country and have driven millions of people from their homes. They are the ones who stand to benefit the most from the political instability and lack of reforms", the SRSG said.

UNAMI urges Government, political leaders to work together to restore security and to engage in dialogue

Baghdad, 30 April 2016 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is gravely concerned by today's developments in Baghdad, including the storming of the Council of Representatives premises by demonstrators after they entered the International Zone.

The Mission condemns the use of violence, including against elected officials, and urges calm, restraint and respect for Iraq's constitutional institutions at this crucial juncture. UNAMI calls on the Government, all political leaders and civil society to work together to immediately restore security and engage in dialogue that will ensure the implementation of the reforms necessary to draw Iraq out of its political, economic and security crisis.

The United Nations continues to operate from its headquarters in Baghdad’s International Zone and is in constant contact with parties to facilitate a solution that meets the demands of the people for reform.
SRSG Kubiš strongly condemns ‘Outrageous’ bombings, calls on Iraqis to unite to prevent ISIL from stoking sectarianism

Baghdad, 01 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the suicide bombings which targeted a funeral in Muqdadiya in Diyala Governorate and another in Abu Ghraib on Monday 29 February 2016.

The SRSG expresses his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Iraq, and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

“These outrageous attacks in Muqdadiya against the funeral, the bombing in Abu Ghraib and at a market in Sadr City as well as places of worship in the last few days which claimed scores of lives and injured many others have one goal: to undermine Iraqi unity,” Mr. Kubiš said.

“Iraqis from all components of society have suffered tremendously from acts of terror committed by ISIL. Nothing can justify such savagery. ISIL’s goal is to weaken the country’s unity by fanning the flames of sectarianism. Together, just as the people of Iraq have teamed up and are making significant advances in combatting ISIL across many areas of the country, Iraqis must deny the terrorists space for achieving their objective to undermine the unity of Iraq and its people,” Mr. Kubiš said.

Mr. Kubiš added: “The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, condemned the recent atrocities and expressed concern that these cowardly acts aim to undermine Iraqi unity. He has appealed to Iraqis to reject such attempts at fear-mongering. I join him in calling on the Government of Iraq to make sure that the perpetrators of these crimes are swiftly brought to justice.”

Kubiš condemns Hilla bombing, deplores continuing loss of life; Iraqis should not fall into the trap of terrorists seeking to fuel sectarian strife

Baghdad, 06 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terrorist bombing near the City of Hilla in the Governorate of Babylon in southern Iraq today, causing scores of casualties, including women and children. He deeply deplors the continuing loss of life and property in yet another terrorist bombing and calls on Iraqis not to be cowed by the terrorists’ murderous campaign.

“Once again the terrorists strike with untold savagery, leaving a trail of death and destruction,” the SRSG said. “This latest atrocity committed by a suicide attacker driving a vehicle packed with explosives targeted a busy roadblock near Hilla as cars queued for security checks. It was clearly intended to exact maximum casualties among civilians.”

“This horrifying attack adds to the terrorists’ long record of brutality that we and all Iraqis of different affiliations strongly condemn and totally reject,” Mr. Kubiš said.

The SRSG expresses his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Iraq, and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

Mr. Kubiš reiterates his appeal to Iraqis not to fall into the trap of the terrorists who seek to undermine the country’s unity and fuel sectarian strife. In this connection, he applauds the restraint shown, for example, by the relatives of the victims and their communities of similar terrorist outrage on 29 February at a funeral ceremony in Muqdadiya. He calls on the Government of Iraq to make sure that the perpetrators of these crimes and those behind them are swiftly brought to justice. “Sooner or later justice avails those terrorists committing crimes against civilians, crimes against humanity”, said Mr. Kubiš.

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Statement of the SRSG welcoming the resolution of the US Congress and statement by Secretary of State Kerry acknowledging the crimes of ISIL constitute international crimes

Baghdad, 18 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, welcomes the resolution adopted by the United States Congress and the statement made by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry, recognising the suffering of the Iraqi people, particularly members of Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious communities, as a result of the crimes committed against them by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and acknowledging that these crimes may constitute international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

“The recognition that the crimes of ISIL may constitute international crimes by the United States Congress and the United States Secretary of State is an important step for ensuring the accountability of members of ISIL, for the atrocious crimes they have perpetrated against the people of Iraq, particularly against Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious communities, including the Yezidi, Christians, Turkmen, Shabak, Shi’a and others”, Mr. Kubiš said.

“The challenge now is for other members of the international community to recognise the grave nature of ISIL’s crimes, and to take concrete action to ensure that these crimes are fully investigated and documented, and that where evidence substantiates it, to hold the perpetrators accountable according to law”, he added.

Mr. Kubiš also reiterated his call to the Government of Iraq to take urgent steps to grant the Iraqi courts appropriate jurisdiction over international crimes committed in connection with the ongoing armed conflict in Iraq, particularly the crimes committed by ISIL, and to ensure that the perpetrators are tried in full compliance with due process and fair trial standards required by international law and the Constitution of Iraq.

He also repeated his request to the Government of Iraq to consider becoming a Party to the Statute of the International Criminal Court or to refer the current conflict to the jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to its Statute so as to ensure the accountability of any individual who may have committed atrocities against the Iraqi people.

“The people of Iraq, and particularly the members of diverse ethnic and religious communities who have suffered from these terrible crimes at the hands of ISIL, demand and deserve justice”, Mr. Kubiš stated.

“By all States taking appropriate action, as the United States has now indicated - by acknowledging the international nature of the crimes committed by ISIL, and the suffering it has inflicted on hundreds of thousands of people, by fully investigating and documenting these crimes, and by ensuring the perpetrators are prosecuted according to law – this will serve as proof of the determination and resolve of the international community that such crimes will not go unpunished. It will also act as a strong deterrent to individuals who may consider committing such appalling crimes in the future and who may believe that they can do so with impunity”, SRSG Kubiš further stated.

Secretary-General’s message on International Day of solidarity with detained and missing staff

New York, 25 March 2016 - Last month, we received the tragic confirmation of the killing of our colleague Amer al-Kaissy in Iraq some nine months after he had been abducted. I repeat my condemnation of this despicable murder and my call on the Iraqi authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice.

On this International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff, I urge intensified efforts to bring all perpetrators of such heinous crimes to justice, and to end impunity.

Last year, six United Nations personnel were abducted and held hostage by non-State actors before being released. Twenty United Nations civilian personnel remain in detention. Five personnel are held by Member States without any reasons given for the arrests.

This unacceptable silence jeopardizes the individuals concerned while undermining the larger mission of the United Nations. Personnel, especially those deployed under dangerous conditions, deserve full protection and rights. Some are local staff striving to advance progress in their own countries. Others are far from their respective homes and families. All represent the best of the United Nations.

I call on all parties to respect the rights, privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel. I also remind national authorities of their responsibility for protecting all UN personnel and preventing violations against them.

All States must also support the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel as well as the 2005 Optional Protocol to the Convention, which extends legal protection to other humanitarian workers.

Among the many who were affected by the death of Mr. al-Kaissy, one friend wrote in tribute a pledge to carry on his vital work. This moving response testifies to the tenacity and commitment of United Nations staff, who deserve full protection as they strive to fulfil our mission to foster development, peace and human rights around the world.
SRSG Kubiš calls bombing at football stadium “Abhorrent Act”, calls for Iraqi unity to thwart terrorists’ goals

Baghdad, 25 March 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terrorist bombing that targeted spectators at a football stadium in the town of Iskandariyah south of Baghdad, killing or injuring many civilians.

“The evildoers are aiming their wrath at the innocent and vulnerable civilians,” the SRSG said. “Today, Daesh committed yet another atrocity, targeting families who were enjoying their weekend attending a football game in their hometown. This abhorrent act deserves the strongest condemnation.”

The SRSG expresses his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Iraq, and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

Mr. Kubiš reiterates his call on Iraqis to unite to thwart the terrorists’ goals of inciting sectarian tensions in the country. He calls on the Government of Iraq to make sure that the perpetrators of these crimes and those behind them are swiftly brought to justice.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of March 2016

Baghdad, 01 April 2016 – A total of 1,119 Iraqis were killed and another 1,561 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in March 2016*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The number of civilians killed in March was 575 (including 45 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department), and the number of civilians injured was 1,196 (including 50 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department).

A total of 544 members of the Iraqi Security Forces (including Peshmerga, SWAT and militias fighting alongside the Iraqi Army but excluding Anbar Operations) were killed and 365 were injured.

The overall casualty figures are up from the previous month of February, where a total of 670 were killed and 1,290 were injured.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, expressed his deep concern at the continuing violence and loss of life and injury in Iraq. “I am extremely disturbed at the continuing loss of life and injury as a result of terrorism, violence and armed conflict. It is totally unacceptable that civilians should bear the brunt of violence,” Mr. Kubiš said.

“My hope is that the proposed reforms will be implemented and will lead to an eventual normalcy in this beautiful country”, SRSG Kubiš added.

Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate with 1,029 civilian casualties (259 killed, 770 injured). Nineawa 133 killed and 89 injured, Babil 65 Killed and 141 injured, Kirkuk 34 killed and 57 injured, while Diyala had 11 killed and 0 injured and Salahadin 6 killed and 1 injured.

According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the Governorate suffered a total of 201 Civilian casualties (64 killed and 137 injured). Figures are updated until 30 March, inclusive.

* CAVEATS: Figures for Anbar are updated until 30 March, inclusive.

UN SRSG strongly condemns bombings in Basra and Nasiriya; and killing of cleric in Baghdad

Baghdad, 4 April 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemned the two terrorist bombings today at a downtown Basra in southern Iraq which left scores of people dead or injured.

“These are yet another example that terrorists will stop at nothing in their attempts to achieve their objectives. But I am confident that the resolve of the Iraqi people will never allow them to do so”, Mr. Kubiš said.

SRSG Kubiš also condemned the fatal attack on Sheikh Othman Al-Janabi in Baghdad yesterday.

“This was, no doubt, an attack that carries sectarian traits. We, at the United Nations, have said time and again that we have zero tolerance for such acts of sectarian terrorism”, SRSG Kubiš said.

“I present my deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives in these attacks and wish a speedy recovery for the injured”, Mr. Kubiš added.

“I call on the authorities to do their utmost in apprehending those responsible for such heinous crimes”, Mr. Kubiš added.
Volume against Daesh 'unparalleled criminality', urges Iraqi unity

SRSG Kubiš condemns Baghdad suicide bombing: an act of ‘unparalleled criminality’, urges Iraqi unity

Baghdad, 22 April 2016 – The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the terrorist suicide bombing that targeted worshippers at a mosque in Radwaniya in southern Baghdad today, killing or injuring many innocent civilians. The SRSG offered condolences to the families of the victims and wished the injured speedy recovery.

“Targeting innocent people during Friday prayers is an act of unparalleled criminality,” Mr. Kubiš said. The terrorists aim from such attacks to weaken national unity and undermine the State. “Daesh terrorists benefit from the Iraqis' divisions and disputes. The answer to such crimes is for Iraqis of all affiliations and backgrounds to redouble their efforts to work towards unity and reconciliation,” the SRSG said.

Mr. Kubiš calls on the Government of Iraq to do its utmost to bring those behind the terrorist attacks to justice.

SRSG Kubiš calls for end to fighting in Tuz Khurmatu, urges unity against Daesh

Baghdad, 25 April 2016 - Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, urges an immediate end to the fighting taking place in Tuz Khurmato, 60 kilometres southeast of Kirkuk, and strongly urges continued efforts to defuse the tensions.

The SRSG expresses his utmost concern that the fighting is endangering the lives of the civilian population and could hinder the fight against Daesh, and his disappointment that a truce was violated soon after it was reached. “This is not the time for such futile fighting. Nothing can justify this violence”, Mr. Kubiš said. “We urge the parties to stop the fighting and to focus their efforts on the battle against the common enemy, Daesh”. The SRSG expresses strong support for ongoing efforts to bring an end to the fighting, saying the parties should work on restoring stability to the area and focus on how to defeat the terrorists.

SRSG Kubiš condemns Baghdad suburb terrorist bombing: “A premeditated and wanton aggression” against civilians

Baghdad, 30 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the suicide bombing that targeted pilgrims and shoppers at a livestock market in the southeastern Baghdad suburb of Nahrwan today, killing or wounding many civilians. The SRSG offers condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured speedy recovery.

“The terrorists have once again targeted with premeditated and wanton aggression pilgrims who were on their way to exercise their religious duty and other civilians seeking to provide a living for their families”, the SRSG said.

Mr. Kubiš praises the Iraqi people’s resilience, despite all the suffering, in the face of such attacks which aim, in addition to killing and maiming, to undermine national unity.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of April 2016

Baghdad, 1 May 2016 – A total of 741 Iraqis were killed and another 1,374 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in April 2016*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The number of civilians killed in April was 410 (including 11 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department), and the number of civilians injured was 973 (including 20 federal police, Sahwa civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, fire department).

A total of 331 members of the Iraqi Security Forces (including Peshmerga, SWAT and militias fighting alongside the Iraqi Army but excluding Anbar Operations) were killed and 401 were injured.

The overall casualty figures are down from the previous month of March, where a total of 1,119 were killed and 1,561 were injured.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, expressed his deep concern at the incessant violence. “It pains us to see the continuing bloodletting and loss of life, particularly among civilians who are paying a high price as a result of bombings and the armed clashes”, Mr. Kubiš said.

“Terrorists have used suicide attacks to target cafés, places of worship, pilgrims and markets in a wicked, unrelenting campaign to cause maximum casualties and inflict untold suffering on the population”, he added.

Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate with 874 civilian casualties (232 killed, 642 injured). Ninewa 72 killed and 30 injured, Salahadin 32 killed and 24 injured, Diyala 17 killed and 15 injured, while Kirkuk had 16 killed and 10 injured and Basra 08 killed and 16 injured.

According to information obtained by UNAMI from the Health Directorate in Anbar, the Governorate suffered a total of 252 civilian casualties (27 killed and 225 injured).

* CAVEATS: In general, UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in conflict areas. Figures for casualties from Anbar Governorate are provided by the Health Directorate and are noted below. Casualty figures obtained from the Anbar Health Directorate might not fully reflect the real number of casualties in those areas due to the increased volatility of the situation on the ground and the disruption of services. In some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. UNAMI has also received, without being able to verify, reports of large numbers of casualties along with unknown numbers of persons who have died from secondary effects of violence after having fled their homes due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicines and health care. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.
Baghdad, 7 March 2016 - UN Women, in partnership with the Women Parliamentary Committee, organized a high-level event today at the Council of Representatives (Parliament) in Baghdad to mark International Women’s Day.

The event comes at a particularly difficult time for Iraqi women and girls, who continue to be subject to gross human rights violations and heightened vulnerability related to the rise in violent extremism and mass displacement. No woman or girl is entirely free of the risk of being subjected to insecurity, human rights abuses, including forced marriage and other forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence. The difficult reality facing Iraqi women today is compounded by entrenched structural discrimination and barriers that lie at the heart of gender inequality.

Opening the event, Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mr. Aram Shiekh Mohammad saluted Iraqi Women on the occasion of the International Women’s Day. “We celebrate Iraqi women and recognize their leadership and political role and sacrifices in shaping the new Iraq”.

The chairwoman of the Women Parliamentary Committee, Ms. Rihab Al Aboud, emphasized the need for greater women involvement in decision-making processes and called “for strong representation of women in the new government”. Ms. Al Aboud stressed.

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political and Electoral Affairs, Mr. Gyorgy Busztin, cited the commitment of the Iraqi government and progress made in women representation in parliament and joined the call for a strong representation of women in the new government. “While we congratulate the Government on its achievement, women’s leadership continue to represent an untapped resource. We encourage the appropriate representation of women in the new technocratic Cabinet,” the DSRSG said.

The 2016 theme for International Women’s Day is “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality”. The United Nations observance on 8 March will reflect on how to accelerate the 2030 Agenda, building momentum for the effective implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals and other existing commitments on gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s human rights.

UN Women briefed members of parliament on the centrality of gender equality for sustainable development and on UN Women’s response strategy in the country whereby the UN Women Iraq Representative, Ms. Hiba Qasas, reminded the audience that “the Sustainable Development, peace and security cannot be achieved if women and girls continue to be discriminated against and are left behind”.

Ms. Qasas also called for the effective leadership of the legislative branch of the government in making the desired change through the elimination of discriminatory laws, reiterating that “there must be a commitment at the national level for the removal of discriminatory laws, amendment of existing laws and enactment of new laws that promote equality.”

Ms. Al Aboud provided a reading of the humanitarian challenges women face today in Iraq and called on the international community and humanitarian agencies to intensify efforts in support of women and girls and to engage with the women parliamentary committee as well as for the creation of a national women machinery and strong representation in the government.

In the context of the humanitarian crisis, Ms. Qasas also stressed the urgency to respond to the immediate needs of displaced women and girls and provide them with targeted livelihood and protection support particularly in the newly liberated areas, and briefed on UN Women’s programmes to this end. Ms. Qasas also urged those in presence to support the leadership role of women and support leverage their voices in national reconciliation and countering extremism and to support the creation of a national women machinery to replace the abolished women ministry.
Calls for supporting women and girls in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 10 March 2016 - UN Women, in partnership with the High Council of Women Affairs (HCOWA), organized an event today in Erbil to mark this year’s International Women’s Day. The event brought together civil society representatives and government officials as part of UN Women’s longer term efforts to support coalition building of women leaders and civil society that are committed and capable of establishing peaceful and stable communities.

The Secretary General of the High Council of Women Affairs, Mrs. Pakhshan Zangana, reiterated in opening remarks the Council’s support for all those “who were victimized by the heinous assaults of extremist and armed groups and terror”. Mrs. Zangana added: “These women are the symbol of honour, endurance and persistence”.

Mrs. Zangana cited the Council’s commitment to work closely with other departments from the government, parliament and other state actors in developing plans and projects to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

The UN Women Representative in Iraq, Ms. Hiba Qasas, highlighted the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment for sustainable development. Ms. Qasas announced the launch of two new programmes to support women’s livelihoods in areas of displacement, including newly liberated areas and the implementation of the 1325 National Action Plan in response to the call for action by the HCOWA and civil society. Ms. Qasas called on all actors to intensify efforts in support of women and girls reiterating that the humanitarian challenges and needs “remain greater than the response ability”.

Ms. Qasas highlighted the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment for sustainable development. Ms. Qasas announced the launch of two new programmes to support women’s livelihoods in areas of displacement, including newly liberated areas and the implementation of the 1325 National Action Plan in response to the call for action by the HCOWA and civil society. Ms. Qasas called on all actors to intensify efforts in support of women and girls reiterating that the humanitarian challenges and needs “remain greater than the response ability”.
An agreement to strengthen collaboration on prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the Arab region signed

Cairo, 29 March 2016 – The United Nations and the League of Arab States today signed an agreement to strengthen collaboration on prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the Arab region. The agreement was signed in Cairo, Egypt, by the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and Nabil el-Araby, Secretary-General of the League of the Arab States. It is meant to form the foundation on which to mobilize political commitment and collaborate in combatting rape and other instances of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly in Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. “This framework of cooperation gives us a platform to join and reinforce our efforts, and together build a comprehensive response in the security, justice and service sectors,” said Special Representative Bangura, who is also a UN Under-Secretary-General. That will include deeper information sharing and analysis, training and capacity building, and providing medical and psychosocial services to survivors and their families, according to a press release from the Office of the Special Representative. The agreement also cites the role of civil society, as well as religious and traditional leaders “to help shift the stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators” and to ensure that survivors and the potential children they bear as a result of the crimes, are accepted back into their communities, the Office said. “Ultimately it is my hope that the focused engagement of the Arab League will catalyze greater national leadership, ownership and responsibility among its member countries to protect vulnerable women, children and men from sexual violence,” Mrs. Bangura added. While in Egypt, the UN Special Representative met with Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb, whose title of Grand Imam of Al Azhar makes him one of the highest authorities in Sunni Islamic thought. During their meeting, Mrs. Bangura received assurance of the Sheikh’s commitment to speaking out against conflict-related sexual violence, particularly in the context of acts by extremist groups such as ISIL and Boko Haram, according to the press release. “This is an affront to the most sacred and fundamental tenets of Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance,” Mrs. Bangura said, referring to what she calls “perverting” of Islam by groups that attempt to give religious justification for sexual slavery and other acts of violence against women and girls.

Workshop on Women, Peace and Security

Baghdad, 12 April 2016 · The Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation in collaboration with UNAMI held a two-day workshop on Women, Peace and Security in Baghdad from 11-12 April 2016. The workshop, the first of its kind following the re-establishment of the Women’s Office in the Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation was aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Committee in implementing that National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 and was a follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations on national reconciliation and women’s participation provided during the National Conference on ‘Empowering Women to Address the Impact of Terrorism’, held in Erbil from 03-04 August 2015. Marwan Ali, Director of Political Affairs and Mohammed Salman, Prime Minister Advisor and Head of the Reconciliation Committee opened the workshop.
UNICEF priority is to foster peace education and understanding between local communities, refugees and displaced families

Basirma, 2 April 2016 - “We should love each other regardless of our religion”, says Sarwan, 13.
A tiny village tucked away in the rolling hills of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Basirma has as many goats as there are cars in its narrow winding streets. A camp that is home to nearly 4,000 Syrian refugees sprawls across the fields close to the village. In addition to the refugee camp, the village also hosts hundreds of Iraqis displaced by violence in Anbar and Fallujah.
Dressed in traditional clothing, Sarwan strolls around the community centre in Basirma, a small concrete building that has become the heart of the community. “Today is a very different experience for me”, she says, as she walks around looking at the arts and crafts on display.
As the conflict in Syria enters its sixth year, and the number of displaced people within Iraq rises above 3.3 million, a major priority of UNICEF and its partners is to foster peace education and understanding between local communities, refugees and displaced families. Peace education takes place when children’s educational and recreation experiences are framed to help them bond and develop a sense of community and social justice.
Thanks to a generous contribution from the Government of Japan, UNICEF implementing partner Terre des Hommes runs a peace education programme in the Basirma community centre. Here children from different backgrounds and religions meet, make friends and share their cultures with one another.
Activities that foster interaction and social bonding take place almost every day, and range from games, art, and sport to environmental activities such as planting trees and cleaning up the village streets. The programme also supports a media unit, which makes and screens films that the families can attend together. It’s become a place where children, no matter what their background, can feel safe.
“It was a very nice day”, said Maryam, 13, “I liked it that everybody was happy”. “All children need events like this one today”, said Duhha, 12, a young girl displaced from Fallujah, “We need it so we can forget the war”.

Slump hurts refugee schools in Kurdistan region of Iraq

Kaweegorsk, 8 April 2016 – The classroom is Spartan. Student numbers are high and teachers have not been paid for months, but deputy principal Mohammed Zekkhi refuses to give up hope.
"These children are our future, we cannot let them down," says Zekkhi, of the primary school at Kawergosk refugee camp, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, or KR-I, which has 1,700 pupils.
Since 2012, the Switzerland-sized area, which is Iraq’s only autonomous region, has hosted a quarter of a million Syrian refugees and more than one million internally displaced Iraqis.
A decade-long economic boom ended two years ago when Baghdad cut funding to the Kurds after they built their own oil pipeline to Turkey and began to export oil independently. With the collapse in the price of crude oil, KR-I is now in economic crisis.
Authorities have cut state workers’ salaries in recent months. Particularly hard hit have been schools such as the one where Zekkhi and his staff teach. They have not been paid their government salaries since September.
Teachers, many of whom are Syrian refugees, face a stark choice between continuing to work without pay at 72 schools in nine refugee camps and dozens of non-camp locations in the region, putting their families at risk financially, or leaving and putting their students’ education in jeopardy.
Unable to continue unpaid, about 15 percent of the primary school’s teachers have already left. In other camps, it is reported that as many as one-third of teachers have had to leave and others are working fewer days per week, but Zekkhi remains resolute.
He said they would carry on, whether they were paid or not, although he conceded the crisis was taking its toll. “We feel like pieces of wood in the sea being moved by the waves. We have no control over our situation.”
The situation is of particular concern to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, which recognizes the importance of formal education in the lives of youngsters driven from their homes by war.
About 2.8 million of them have fled the Syrian conflict alone.
Jozef Merkx, UNHCR’s coordinator in the autonomous region, said ensuring children remained enrolled in formal education was important in avoiding negative coping mechanisms, such as early marriage and child labour. “These children are losing their childhood to displacement,” he said. “We must ensure that they don’t lose their adulthood because of a lack of education”.
Because of a decline in the number of teachers, class sizes have grown and more lessons are being crammed into a shorter time. The teaching week has also been disrupted, with children spending longer hours in school on some days, while on others they have no classes. All the factors have led to low enrolment and high dropout rates among refugee children.
By Michael Prendergast, UNHCR Iraq
New secondary school in Basirma Camp to improve access and quality of education for Syrian refugees

Basirma Camp, 12 April 2016 – Today, Syrian students celebrated the opening of a new school in Basirma camp. The inauguration ceremony was also attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education and Local Administration of the Kurdistan Region, teachers and parents. The Roj Awa Secondary School will be open to multiple shifts, allowing more than 500 students to access secondary schooling. The inauguration ceremony will mark the beginning of a comprehensive outreach initiative to enrol students for the next academic year. Secondary schooling has existed in Basirma camp since 2014/15. However, the previous structure was small and could only host up to 60 students. The old school has now been replaced with a new building, constructed by UNESCO under the project ‘Improving access to secondary education for Syrian refugees in Iraq’, funded by the Government of Japan.

The new pre-fabricated building - comprised of six classrooms, one administration room, one storage and three toilet units - has been furnished and equipped by UNESCO. Three of the classrooms have been provided by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Back-to-back workshops address Iraqi curriculum development and national frameworks for assessment and evaluation

Amman, 18 April 2016 - The UNESCO Office for Iraq organized four consecutive workshops in Amman to finalize mathematics and science curriculum, develop guidelines for evaluating textbooks, classroom practices and finalizing the first draft of the National Framework for Assessment and Evaluation (NFAE).

The first workshop, held from 28 March to 31 March, 2016, aimed at finalizing the instructional materials (teacher guide and student activity book) for mathematics and sciences for grades 5 and 6. The first drafts of these instructional materials were prepared during a workshop organized by UNESCO in December 2015 where the participants were tasked with drafting the remaining units, to be handed back to the UNESCO experts for editing and completion. 35 curriculum specialists from the Ministries of Education (MoE & MoHE) from Baghdad and Erbil participated in the finalization process of the instructional materials. The second workshop held from 2 to 4 April, 2016 aimed at developing practical guidelines for the process of evaluating textbooks, curriculum development management and laid out guidelines on how to implement a successful piloting process. The newly developed curriculum’s for mathematics and sciences for grade 5 will be piloted in schools in Iraq (except KR-I) starting at the next academic year.

Iraq currently does not have any national or international system to assess classroom practices, exams and assessments. The third workshop, held from 5 - to 7 April 2016 was dedicated to introducing 18 staff members of the MoE’s from Baghdad and Erbil to international and regional models of classroom assessments used in other countries. The participants along with the UNESCO experts discussed how certain aspects of these examples can be introduced to Iraq and adjusted to create a comprehensive system for evaluating and supporting effective teaching in classrooms.

The fourth workshop, held from 9 to 12 April, 2016, focused on modifying parts of the National Framework for Assessment and Evaluation (NFAE), the first draft of the framework was developed during a five day workshop held in February. Participants of this workshop revised that draft, discussed ways to modify certain parts in order to finalize it. The parts modified were those addressing the assessment of the Iraqi educational system, classroom assessment and the evaluation of teachers and schools.

The four workshops were held as part of the project ‘Developing New Iraqi Curricula’ implemented in cooperation with, and funded by, the Education Above All, a global initiative by Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser of Qatar, UNESCO Special Envoy for basic and higher education.
UNICEF: How to better ensure micronutrients are provided to children in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 February 2016 - Yesterday the Ministries of Health and Trade and representatives from the Prime Minister’s Office came together with UNICEF to discuss how to better ensure micronutrients are provided to children in Iraq. The meeting focused on iodized salt and iron fortified wheat. Deficiencies in micronutrients like iodine and iron can impair cognitive functions including attention span, intelligence and sensory perception. Iodine deficiency can result in goiter and has been demonstrated to reduce IQ by 10 to 15 points, making it the leading cause of preventable mental handicaps in the world. Deficiency is easily prevented by adding small amounts of iodine to salt.

Iron is necessary for red blood cells to carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Iron deficiency can cause problems breathing, lower energy and generally poor health. Supplementing wheat with iron can reduce anemia and contribute to better school performance in children. Wheat is one of the staple foods for many children in Iraq - up to 3 million tonnes of wheat will be imported in 2016.

The Adviser to the Minister of Health, Dr Abdul Ameer Al-Mukhtar, along with representatives from the Ministry of Trade, emphasized that Iraq has existing policies and laws to promote both salt iodization and iron supplementation in wheat, and that this meeting was called to identify gaps and challenges and to outline solutions to improve these practices.

"UNICEF is delighted to be a part of this important meeting. Children in Iraq and everywhere have a fundamental right to nutritious food. UNICEF, through our Health and Nutrition Section, will support the Government of Iraq and private industry to establish good practices, improve technical capacity, and help inform the public about the need to ensure children consume iodized salt and iron fortified wheat," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

The meeting concluded with recommendations on enforcing existing laws, expanding policy to cover gaps, and working with farmers, salt manufacturers and the media to ensure that these vital nutrients are available to all Iraqi children and their families.

Launch of the Iraqi Ministry of Health’s emergency obstetric and neonatal care needs assessment results

Baghdad, 2 March 2016 - The Iraqi Ministry of Health, jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), launched the Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EmONC) services assessment results. Despite the significant progress Iraq has made over the last years in reducing maternal mortality, the report illustrated enormous needs in providing the life-saving EmONC services for mothers and their babies.

According to the report, only one third of the hospitals and none of the health centers in Iraq abided to the EmONC international standards. The report also highlighted that two thirds of deliveries in Iraq take place in these facilities, deeming it necessary for the government and international actors to act instantly to upgrade these services.

The welcome speech was delivered on behalf of H.E. The Minister of Health, by Dr. Ihsan Jaffar, the Director General for public and primary health, which stated “Progress towards ending maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths depends on how well and diligent we go about improving reproductive health services including emergency obstetric care”.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ramathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, highlighted the importance of building on the momentum gained by the MDGs by ensuring access to quality emergency Obstetric and neonatal care services. He said “The report, adhering to international quality assurance standards and methodology, is the most comprehensive assessment of EmoNC services in Iraq, and will help establish a solid baseline which when combined with recent data on IDP population movement and access data, can help formulate and implement EmONC programmes with high degree of accuracy”.

He further remarked “As Iraq gears up to respond to a critical phase of security and humanitarian demands, addressing women’s reproductive health, in particular their emergency obstetric care is also an opportunity to put the rights and dignity of women and girls at the heart of the people-centered, equity-driven, rights-based agenda”. Mr. Balakrishnan added, that UNFPA is committed to supporting the Ministry of Health to generate a detailed action plan to upgrade EmONC services.

The Ministry of Health highlighted key elements of follow-up to the findings and recommendations of the report, which included, tailoring its Reproductive Health and Maternal and child health strategies to the study recommendations, strengthening the capacity of health providers, strengthening the health information system, addressing the issue of the medicine supply chain, and to revisit its policies and guidelines to further improve EmONC services. The assessment was also supported by UNICEF and was technically supported from the Averting Maternal Death and Disability (AMDD) program team of Columbia University.
Mobile medical clinics connect patients to health care in camps in Iraq

Iraq, 13 March 2016 – Amira, aged 5, from Ramadi City, Iraq, is one of the tens of thousands refugees and migrants in need of health care. The arrival of a mobile primary health care clinic is giving her a reason to smile. “I was sick and I was afraid of what could happen to me. The mobile clinic staff provided me with a sense of protection. I now have the strength to help my family, think about my future and I sure can’t wait to go back to school,” she said.

Mobile medical clinic in Iraq provides much needed health care
This mobile clinic, supported by WHO, operates in one of the Amriyat Al-Fallujah camps. The clinics have been in circulation in Iraq for about a year and are linked to the health care system. Clinics are located in Anbar and Baghdad governorates, Kirkuk, Diyala, Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah. The scale of this emergency has increased exponentially and has become increasingly more complex. There is a pressing urgency to reach every person, especially the most disadvantaged with much needed health care.

WHO, UNICEF and MOH 2015 Cholera outbreak response will minimize future risk

Baghdad, 23 March 2016 - After the declaration of the cholera epidemic in Iraq in September 2015 and in anticipation of a potential new outbreak, WHO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health of Iraq, jointly with WASH and health cluster partners held a lessons learned consultation meeting today to review lessons and best practices from the successful 2015 outbreak response. These consultations will help guide cholera contingency plans for 2016 and beyond.

Cholera outbreaks occur in Iraq about every three to five years and have a distinct seasonality that typically start in September and continue through December when cases naturally decline with a high probability of another outbreak the following spring. However, immediate and efficient response actions can reduce cases and save lives.

“The cholera outbreak response in 2015 put in place rapid lifesaving interventions that helped minimize the epidemic. We need to take stock of what was done, and use this opportunity to design a comprehensive preparedness and response plan for the next outbreak,” said WHO Acting Representative for Iraq, Mr Altaf Musani. “WHO remains committed to support the Ministry of Health and health cluster partners with effective cholera prevention and control measures including pre-positioning stockpiles of essential medicines and medical supplies and capacity for laboratory testing. These best practices will be important to avert mortality and morbidity when cholera strikes again,” Mr Musani explained.

The lessons learned consultation meeting focused on a number of key issues, including:

- Building local capacities to scale up surveillance, case investigation and management, as well as cholera prevention and control measures
- Strengthening laboratory capacities at central, governorate, and peripheral levels to ensure early detection and confirmation of the cholera
- Enhancing collaborative activities between relevant ministries and agencies, with clear roles and accountability
- Maintaining strong and regular communication with the health sector and applying an inter-sectoral approach for Cholera/Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) management.

“The Ministry of Health with the support of WHO, UNICEF, and WASH and health cluster partners is building a comprehensive cholera prevention and response program with high capacity to respond to and contain any future public health risks including a potential cholera outbreak in 2016,” said Dr Adila Hammoud Minister of Health of Iraq. “We are going to benefit from the successful collaborative efforts the ministry had with WHO and partners during the last cholera outbreak that spread to almost all Iraqi governorates.” Dr Hammoud added.

“UNICEF and partners, such as the World Health Organization and MOH, reacted immediately when cholera was confirmed in Iraq in 2015, and within 48 hours of the announcement we began our joint response. Initial activities empowered communities to protect themselves by knowing how to avoid and treat cholera, while intensive water and sanitation programmes took away the cholera transmission routes. With these joint efforts, by December 2015, even with over 10 million people from all over the world converging in Karbala, and with over 3 million people internally displaced, the outbreak was over.” Remarked Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Iraq Country Representative.

Cholera is endemic in Iraq, and the outbreak, officially declared in September 2015, resulted in 4945 cases confirmed in 17 of the 18 governorates across Iraq. WHO and UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and other partners to put in place immediate preventive and control measures that included targeting approximately 249,319 people with Oral Cholera Vaccine (OCV) in a 2-round immunization campaign for vulnerable populations in 62 refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and collective centres throughout the country.
UNFPA launches Government of Japan supported Reproductive Health project at Al-Abbasia camp in Salah Al-Din

Baghdad, 30 March 2016 - UNFPA, with generous support from the government of Japan, has launched a Reproductive Health (RH) Clinic in Al-Abbasia camp, Salah Al-Din province on 24 March 2016. One hundred and five women visited the clinic on the first day itself to seek gynecological / obstetrical consultations and services. The clinic is run by the United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS) and offers the full package of RH services on a daily basis including antenatal and postnatal care, family planning, diagnosis and treatment of reproductive tract infections (RTIs) including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and health counseling to women. Its staff includes a female gynecologist, a female nurse and a general practitioner. This clinic is part of a larger Japan-funded UNFPA project which includes the establishment and support of 22 RH clinics and delivery rooms in 2016 in Al-Anbar, Diyala, Salah Al-Din, Nineveh, Dohuk and Erbil. The project aims at increasing access to Reproductive Health Services and Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care facilities for IDP, returnee and refugee populations with a particular attention to reinforcing local health system (director/district) capacities. Among the project’s expected outcomes are: 10,000 safe deliveries; access to RH Services including information and family planning for 60,000 women and adolescent girls; and 80 Health professionals trained on Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Health Care.

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator visits IDP Call Center

Erbil, 2 March 2016 - United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Lise Grande, visited the Iraq IDP call centre today in Erbil. More than 10,000 people have benefitted from the IDP call centre. The Iraq Internally Displaced Persons Information Centre (Iraq IIC) provides information on available humanitarian assistance and receives complaints and feedback from displaced families on the humanitarian response provided by aid agencies. The Iraq IIC was launched in July 2015 after humanitarian agencies identified an information vacuum surrounding humanitarian assistance – which meant many displaced families did not know what services were available to support them. Call content ranges from requests for information on humanitarian services, including how to register for food vouchers, to requests for help in dealing with gender-based violence.

High-level diplomatic visit to Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 7 March 2016 - Today, a delegation of Ambassadors/Representatives of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and the US, as well as Ambassador/Head of the EU Delegation and the World Bank Director to Iraq, along with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq visited the Kurdistan Region. The delegation was received by His Excellency Kurdistan Region President Masood Barzani and had meetings with His Excellency Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirwan Barzani. The main focus of the visit was to discuss the economic, fiscal and social situation in the Kurdistan Region including the reforms proposed by the KRG, the need for political unity and possible support of the International Community. Other topics concerning political as well as security developments, notably related to fighting ISIS were raised.

Timeline
UN Envoy for Iraq extends his best wishes to the Sabean Mandaean community on Eid Al-Bronaya

Baghdad, 16 March 2016 – On the occasion of the Eid Al-Bronaya, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Mr. Ján Kubiš, extends his best wishes to the Sabean Mandaean community as they embark on a week-long of festivities to celebrate Eid Al-Bronaya.

“The Sabean Mandaeans are one of the vulnerable communities in Iraq who are facing reduction in numbers due to attacks and intimidation by ISIL, but also by rogue armed groups and criminal gangs. We hope the security situation will improve across Iraq so that Iraqis of all faiths can co-exist peacefully. We call on all political and religious leaders to promote tolerance, understanding and peaceful co-existence to counter terrorism and sectarianism”, Mr. Kubiš said.

“In the context of UNAMI’s Security Council mandate to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, we will continue to strengthen our co-operation with religious leaders and civil society organisations, as well as relevant institutions to promote the implementation of the United Nations Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism, which was adopted in January 2016”, Mr. Kubiš added.

“I wish you success and safety while celebrating your holy week. I also urge the Government to implement confidence-building measures to promote tolerance, equality, justice and respect for diversity, thus working towards community and national reconciliation”, SRSG Kubiš further added.

Clean-up drive in a camp south of Baghdad

Baghdad, 16 March 2016 - UNHCR has sponsored a campaign to clean the Salam Camp in southern Baghdad, the largest IDP camp in the capital city. Due to the expanding area of the camp, litter has become a serious problem. Work was carried out with the executive partner, the Canadian Organization for Aid and Social Rehabilitation (COAFISR). Efforts collaborated to turn the camp into a healthy environment for more than 6,000 people living onsite after they fled the conflict in the provinces of Anbar and Salah Ad-Deen.

Halabja massacre commemorated in Erbil

Erbil, 16 March 2016 - Halabja massacre was commemorated today at a solemn ceremony held at the UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Today marks the 28th anniversary of the Halabja massacre when the regime of Saddam Hussein carried out a chemical weapons attack in Halabja. More than 5,000 people died in the massacre in 1988.
Baghdad, 27 March 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, extends his best wishes to the Christian community of Iraq on the occasion of Easter.

"Iraqi Christian communities have been in Iraq for two millennia, a major component of the fabric of Iraqi society over the centuries. They are amongst those who suffered greatly under ISIL and other rogue groups and criminal gauge", SRSG Kubiš said.

“I appeal to the Government of Iraq to put measures in place to ensure their security and protection that will keep them attached to their country and convince them that they have a future in the land of their ancestors which they have shared with other communities for thousands of years”, Mr. Kubiš added.

“I call on Iraqis of different backgrounds, the Christians’ partners in this country, to appreciate the wealth of the diversity of Iraq and seek to wholeheartedly preserve it.”

“I wish you a safe and peaceful Easter celebrations, hoping that next year we will all be able to celebrate with Iraq free of the terrorist threat”, he concluded.
in 2010 and I visited many of her buildings, from the MAXXI Museum in Rome, to the Heydar Cultural Centre in Baku. Each one of her creations is an enriching experience of space and soul, and will remain as her legacy to inspire future generations of thinkers and artists. On behalf of UNESCO and in my own name, I express my heartfelt sympathy to her family and colleagues”.

Born in Baghdad in 1950, Ms Hadid graduated in mathematics from the American University of Beirut before enrolling at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London (UK). A ground-breaking thinker and creator, Ms Hadid was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2004. Her innovative buildings in Europe, Asia and America have been the center of passionate debate.

UNESCO Director-General pays tribute to the memory of Ms Zaha Hadid, “visionary architect” and UNESCO Artist for Peace

Paris, 1 April 2016 - The Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova, expressed her deep sadness after the passing away of Ms Zaha Hadid, UNESCO Artist for Peace on Thursday, 31 March 2016. “Zaha Hadid was a visionary architect and a great advocate for excellence in design and creativity. She was a role model for millions of girls and women interested in creation, willing to push forward the boundaries of art. She was also a bridge between cultures and a very committed UNESCO Artist for Peace for Intercultural Dialogue. I had the privilege to appoint her UNESCO Artist for peace in 2010 and I visited many of her buildings, from the MAXXI Museum in Rome, to the Heydar Cultural Centre in Baku. Each one of her creations is an enriching experience of space and soul, and will remain as her legacy to inspire future generations of thinkers and artists. On behalf of UNESCO and in my own name, I express my heartfelt sympathies to her family and colleagues”. Born in Baghdad in 1950, Ms Hadid graduated in mathematics from the American University of Beirut before enrolling at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London (UK). A ground-breaking thinker and creator, Ms Hadid was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2004. Her innovative buildings in Europe, Asia and America have been the center of passionate debate.

UN-HABITAT mourns death of Dame Zaha Hadid

Baghdad, 04 April 2016 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme mourns the death of Dame Zaha Hadid, one of the most celebrated and iconic architects and urban design figures of our time.

Known as an architect who consistently pushed the boundaries of architecture and urban design, her work experimented with new spatial concepts, intensifying existing urban landscapes and encompassing all fields and levels of design. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme’s Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos expressed his deepest condolences for the loss of Zaha Hadid: “This is sorrowful news of an inspirational role model for female architects, and I extend sincere condolences to the family of Zaha Hadid and to the Iraqi people”. Dame Zaha Hadid mentioned once that it was "still tough for (her), too, as a woman architect". But she was tough and she made it to the top in a male-dominated profession designing some of the world’s most legendary urban monuments.

In a recent postcard she wrote to herself, “Your success will not be determined by your gender or your ethnicity, but only by the scope of your dreams”. She was a real pioneer of our time who gave the right and true image of women and Iraqi people. She will always be remembered for her formidable urban legacy.

SRSG Kubiš visits Kuwait

Kuwait, 6 April 2016 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG), Ján Kubiš, met in Kuwait City today with Kuwait’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad Al-Sabah. They discussed bilateral cooperation as well as support for Iraq in the political, humanitarian and economic fields. The SRSG also met with Dr. Ibrahim M. Shaheen, the Acting Chairman of the National Committee on the Missing Persons and Prisoner of War Affairs (NCMPA), and discussed the progress made on this matter.
Erbil, April 2016 – Thousands of new titles and publications in Arabic, Kurdish, and English went on display on 5 April 2016 as the 11th Erbil International Book Fair opened in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The President of Kurdistan Region, His Excellency Mr. Masoud Barzani, inaugurated the fair as people from various backgrounds – governmental, political, institutional, religious, and the youths – flocked to participate in the opening and to take their first glimpse at the annual event.

In opening remarks, the Governor of Erbil, Mr. Nawzad Hadi, stressed the importance of the book fair in encouraging reading and advocating peace amid the war on terror.

UN Iraq has a stand in the fair, where leaflets, brochures, booklets and promotional material from UNAMI and the UN Country Team are on display and are being distributed.

On 10 April 2016 Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) Gyorgy Busztin visited the Erbil International book fair. Accompanied by the UNAMI Director of PIO Samir Ghattas, DSRSG Busztin stopped at numerous publisher stands represented at the book fair and greeted visitors at the UN Iraq booth. Later in the afternoon, DSRSG Busztin participated in the panel “Political reform and the future of Iraq”. The panel discussed the current political situation in the country, the protests against the government, and the planned Cabinet reshuffle as well as potential ways to draw Iraq out of its crisis.

Baghdad designated as a UNESCO creative city of literature

Baghdad, 14 April 2016 - Under the theme “Cultural Industry is a Ladder of the Future”, the House of Wisdom Theater in Baghdad celebrated today the designation of Baghdad as a UNESCO creative city of literature.

Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Gyorgy Busztin, and Ms. May Shaer, on behalf of UNESCO Iraq, attended the event. "Baghdad, capital of the world for five centuries of its history, was a centre of attraction for the greatest writers and poets," Mr. Busztin said in an address. "Until this day it remained a centre radiating with the names of its writers and poets as well as the richness of its literature."

He said Baghdad was not only the capital of the Abbasids but also the capital of the Arab and Islamic civilization where people seeking literature and science from all over the Old World converged on. Baghdad, he added, "set the example in coexistence and diversity."

Selecting Baghdad as a creative city of literature is because its contemporary literary generations are based on this great historic diversity.

SRSG Kubis meets USIP representative and a Swiss State Secretary

Baghdad, 19 April 2016 - SRSG Kubis met today Mr. Elie Abouaoun, Director of Middle East Programs Center for Middle East and Africa of the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). USIP’s support for community based reconciliation in Iraq was discussed.

SRSG Kubis also received today in Baghdad Mr. Yves Rossier, Swiss State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who is currently visiting Iraq, and informed him about United Nations activities in the country. The current political, security and humanitarian situation in Iraq were also discussed.

The Secretary Rossier briefed on Switzerland’s assistance to Iraq, especially on the humanitarian support.
**Timeline**

**Kubiš on Yezidi New Year celebration: They have suffered immensely from Daesh atrocities and deserve to live in peace, dignity, freedom and in full respect of their rights**

Baghdad, 20 April 2016 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, extends his best wishes to the Yezidi community of Iraq on the occasion of their new year, and also remembers those Yezidi who have been killed and displaced as well as the suffering of the thousands of their women who have been kidnapped and who continue to be subjected to slavery by the Daesh terrorists.

“While this is a celebration of the new year by an ancient community, it is also a particularly painful reminder of the current suffering of the Yezidi people at the hands of the terrorists of Daesh since 2014,” the SRSG said.

“More than 3,500 women, mainly Yezidi, remain enslaved by the terrorists and subjected to horrific violations on a daily basis. Many Yezidi children were kidnapped, hundreds of men were killed and thousands others fled their homes to escape the onslaught of Daesh which singled out this community for particular savagery.”

The United Nations has consistently acknowledged that the human rights abuses committed by Daesh against Yezidi and other communities may constitute international crimes, including war crimes, against humanity and genocide.

The SRSG repeats his call on the Government of Iraq to ensure accountability for these terrible crimes and justice for the victims and survivors by granting to Iraqi courts jurisdiction over international crimes, as well as to consider becoming a signatory to the Statute of the International Criminal Court or to refer the current conflict to the jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to its statute. By so doing the Government of Iraq will signal its seriousness of intent to the international community that any individual who may have committed atrocity crimes against the Iraqi people will be held accountable according to law.

The SRSG recalls the diversity of Iraq’s people is the country’s biggest source of wealth which must be protected and respected by its government and people. “The Yezidi are among the most vulnerable communities and have suffered immensely from Daesh’s atrocities. Like all minorities and the rest of the Iraqi people, they deserve to live in peace, dignity, freedom and in full respect of their rights.”

He notes that since the last observation of the Yezidi new year, the town of Sinjar, site of Daesh massacres of the Yezidi, was liberated in November 2015. The SRSG expresses his hope that the next celebration will be one in which those held captive by Daesh will celebrate in freedom and that all those who have been displaced as a result of conflict will have been able to return freely to their places of origin.

**Friends of UNICEF promote water conservation at the Baghdad University**

Baghdad, 21 April 2016 – The Friends of UNICEF youth voluntary group recently held a debate with students from Baghdad University at the College of Science, Mathematical Department, Adrisi Hall. The debate was on the topic of water conservation and its impact on the society. The team representing the University debated against the motion, while member of the Friends of UNICEF youth group debated for the motion of water conservation. At the end of an informative and fruitful debate, the university students joined the youth group in sharing their ideas on water conservation. It is worth mentioning that the water conservation campaign and the #FriendsOfUnicef voluntary youth group are sponsored by the European Union and supported by the UNICEF Iraq WASH programme and UNAMI.

**Director-General of UNESCO condemns new destructions in the ancient city of Nineveh, Iraq (Mosul)**

Paris, 21 April 2016 – The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, condemns the destruction of the two historic gates of Mesqa and Addad, and parts of the old ramparts of the archaeological site of Nineveh (Mosul). "I condemn the destruction of the gates of Mesqa and Addad, which are new crimes in a long list of attacks against the cultural heritage of Iraq, after the destruction of the winged bull of the Nergal gate, and the destruction at the Museum in 2015. These deliberate destructions are a war crime against the people of Iraq, whose heritage is a symbol and medium of identity, history and memory. These destructions are linked to the suffering and violence on human lives, and weaken the society over the long term. They are also attacks against the humanity we all share, against the values of openness and diversity of this region, as the cradle of civilizations", said the Director-General.

"Nineveh is an ancient city whose memory has been transmitted for centuries by people of all origins and all religions who admired and preserved its remains so they could be passed to future generations. We are the custodians of this heritage, which we have a responsibility to share and transmit”, she added.

Nineveh is one of the oldest cities of Mesopotamia, a crossroads of trade routes and a strategic intersection between the Mediterranean Sea and the territories of Persia. The archaeological site bears witness to human settlements dating back to the sixth millennium BC. Like all restored gates of Nineveh, the doors of Mesqa and Addad offered an example of the work of archaeologists in the 19th and 20th centuries for the preservation of monuments and were part and parcel to the archaeological landscape of the site. They also fulfilled an essential function of protecting the foundations of the original gates and walls. The historic gates and ramparts of Nineveh are included on the tentative list of Iraq, as a site which can be inscribed on the list of UNESCO World Heritage.