Madame President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

I have the honour to present the fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017), as well as the eighteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013) on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and property.

Madame President,

On 12 May 2018 – within the constitutional time-frame- Iraq held elections to its national parliament, the Council of Representatives (CoR). Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, after the close of the polls, noted that the country held the elections on time, that people were able to cast their votes and select their representatives freely and safely and that the liberated areas witnessed a free voting process for the first time after the victory of the Iraqi forces and the defeat of Da’esh. He stated, "Our heroic forces achieved another victory by
protecting the democratic process and the citizens at polling centres spread throughout Iraq, and foiled terrorism's attempts to destabilize security and stability on this historic day which passed peacefully for all Iraqis."

The Secretary-General on 13 May congratulated the people of Iraq on the holding of parliamentary elections and stated that following the military defeat of Da'esh, the elections represent further progress in building a stronger Iraqi democracy. He saluted the tireless efforts of electoral officials, party agents and the security forces in making the elections largely peaceful and orderly.

Following the elections, international partners, including the governments of Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, United Kingdom, and the European Union congratulated the Iraqi people, the security forces and electoral authorities on the peaceful conduct of the elections and pledged to work with the next government in helping deliver stability, security and prosperity for all Iraqis.

Madame President,

Overall, 6,986 candidates out of which 2,014 Women (28.8%) competed for 329 seats (including 9 seats reserved for minorities out of which 5 for Christians, and one each for Sabaean-Mandaean, Shabaks, Yazidis and Fayili Kurds). In total, 52,483 polling stations operated out of the planned 52,936, including 3,000 polling stations devoted to displaced persons, resident both in camps and in local communities. The elections were held in a generally calm and stable environment notwithstanding some 47 security incidents recorded by the Mission, including attacks with improvised explosive devices, indirect attack
with mortars, small arms fire aimed at polling centres, and clashes between security forces and unknown gunmen. These incidents occurred mainly in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates, although incidents with firearms and knives were registered in the southern governorates. Some of the attacks were claimed by Da’esh whose threat to disrupt the elections failed due to the efforts by Iraqi security forces. I also note that prior to the elections, the Mission recorded eighteen reports of attacks against candidates from different political groupings and in various regions of the country. Of these, one was killed, and several were injured.

Madame President,

The elections were marked by a low voter turnout: the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) informed about the participation of 44.52%, just 10.8 million out of 24.3 million eligible voters, a significant decrease in comparison with previous national elections in Iraq after 2003. The new parliament will also witness a massive turn-over - according to the preliminary results less than 100 of the incumbent MPs have secured their place in the new Council of Representatives. The decision by more than half of the voting population not to exercise their democratic right has several reasons. But, actually it sends a strong signal to the elites ruling the country since 2003, a loud call on their representatives to finally rise up to the people’s expectations, to provide for the peoples’ needs, and to place the interests of the Iraqi people and the nation, above partisan, sectarian, individual or group interests. I urge the Iraqi political elites to hear that call and draw the necessary conclusions on the need for improved representation, justice for all, democratic accountability and
good governance void of corruption, sectarian quota system, nepotism and patronage.

Madame President,

The candidates and political parties conducted broadly respectful campaigns, largely free from sectarian-based discourse or inflammatory statements. Having said so, I strongly condemn defamation campaigns that specifically targeted women candidates attacking their dignity and their reputation. They were also assailed by death threats, harassment and cyberbullying with one aim - to undermine their engagement in the political process, and further shrink their political space. I urged political parties and all Iraqi society to stand up against such acts that only serve to undermine the democratic process. I met a number of women candidates to discuss the situation and encouraged them to proceed with their campaigns irrespective of the intimidation they were facing. The follow-up committee of the Electoral Charter of Honour adopted by political blocs and parties with UNAMI facilitation, issued a statement calling for a free and fair campaign without intimidation or harassment of candidates, especially women.

Despite that defamation campaign, I am pleased to report that several female candidates received a high number of votes within their political lists, and that some 19 female candidates were elected to parliament. Our expectation for the future is that the 25% quota which now guarantees 83 seats for women, represents the minimum threshold and not the ceiling.
As part of UNAMI’s advocacy efforts to promote the effective participation and representation of women in political and decision-making processes in Iraq during the elections and subsequent negotiations on government formation, we digitally launched the #WhyNot Campaign - Hashtag #Shakobeha. Short films highlighting successful women as well as men championing women’s participation in political processes are a part of this campaign.

I urge political leaders to ensure the full participation of women in negotiations on the formation of the next ruling coalition and the government, and their representation at the highest levels in Iraq’s political and decision-making structures in the parliament and the government as pledged by many political leaders in the election campaign.

Madame President,

Following the closure of the polls, many Iraqi political leaders publicly endorsed the electoral process including the Prime Minister and the President. They continue to urge a timely conduct and conclusion of the complaint process, certification and acceptance of the results, and speeding-up of the formation of the new government, within the constitutional timeline and in accordance with relevant legal procedures, and to protect the political process and to avoid a constitutional vacuum. Some other political forces and leaders, including Vice Presidents of the Republic and the Speaker of the Parliament, raised concerns over some of the technical shortfalls encountered with the electronic vote tabulation devices, as well as reports of fraud and vote rigging, active intimidation of voters including by some armed formations, and political
interference. Criticizing notably the IHEC for failing to perform a sound and transparent electoral process that is trusted by the people, and to effectively address the complaints in a transparent way, they have demanded the recount of votes in some governorates, the annulment of results of out of country voting and voting of the IDPs, and even fresh elections. After failing on several occasions to achieve a quorum; and amidst questions about the legality of some of their decisions, on 28 May in an exceptional session, the Council of Representatives decided i.a. to request the IHEC to undertake the manual counting of 10 per cent of the ballot boxes that could trigger the manual counting of all the ballots in case of a discrepancy of 25 percent and above. Prior to this session, 100 MPs, including the Speaker, submitted a letter to the Secretary-General requesting UN intervention.

On 24 May, the Council of Ministers (CoM) at an extraordinary meeting dedicated to discussing allegations of electoral fraud decided to form a High Commission to investigate reports and documents pertaining to the elections. The committee will present its recommendations to the CoM, Supreme Judicial Council, Federal Supreme Court, and Electoral Judicial Panel for appropriate measures. The High Commission already referred the IHEC to the Integrity Commission, a move rejected by the IHEC as an interference in its independence.

Six Kurdistani parties, namely Gorran, Kurdistan Islamic Union, Kurdistan Islamic Group, Kurdistan Islamic Movement, the Coalition for Democracy and Justice, and the Kurdistan Communist Party, have questioned the credibility of the electoral process in the Kurdistan region and have been calling for a recount of the votes in the Kurdistan governorates, and even for the re-run of the
elections. On the other hand, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan have announced their satisfaction with the outcome of the elections and their intention to start dialogue on coalition building with political parties in Baghdad.

In Kirkuk governorate – one of several hotspots of complaints - the situation remains volatile, with mostly Turkmen and Arab parties, demanding manual recounting of the election results and their supporters camping out around the warehouse in which ballot boxes are stored.

On 17 May, I called on the Electoral Commission to act expeditiously and seriously to address all complaints including, as necessary, the conduct of a partial manual recount in selected locations, notably in Kirkuk. I stressed the importance of undertaking such measures in full transparency, witnessed by stakeholders, to strengthen confidence in the process. I also called on all political actors to uphold the peace and to remain committed to resolving any electoral disputes through the established legal channels.

Madame President,

The preliminary elections results were released by the Electoral Commission on 19 May. IHEC also posted details regarding the number of complaints lodged against the polling process. As per IHEC records, there were a total of 1,438 complaints received, including 27 pertaining to out-of-country voting, 139 on special voting and 1,272 on the regular polling day. However, only 33 complaints were red-flagged as potentially having a serious effect on the results and requiring in-depth investigation. As a result of these complaints, IHEC
decided to cancel the results from 134 polling stations located in Anbar (51), Ninawa (16), Salah al-Din (11), Baghdad (26) and Erbil (30). Up to 500 IDPs in Ninawa staged demonstrations against this decision, claiming their votes were annulled unfairly. In addition, IHEC took the decision (No. 13/25 on 18 May 2018) to cancel 186 polling stations’ results in Kirkuk, stating that these polling stations faced difficulties in sending the results to the IHEC Data Center. Likewise, the Board of Commissioners decided during its 18 May meeting (IHEC decision No. 1/25 of 18 May 2018) to cancel 56 out-of-country polling stations for delays in sending the results within the deadline set by the Commission.

We continue to urge all Iraqi political actors and their supporters to uphold peace, as electoral appeals are being adjudicated through established legal channels. I also call on the Electoral Commission to continue to safeguard the integrity of all electoral materials and equipment and to cooperate fully and abide by the decisions of the Electoral Judicial Panel, including possible measures to effectively address complaints as lodged by stakeholders in a number of locations. We urge the independent electoral management bodies to adjudicate all appeals properly, fully and expeditiously, to enable corrections of the problems, justice and the timely certification of the final election results.

I also wish to highlight the readiness and availability of United Nations electoral advice and expertise, in support of any activities and measures that may be required to retain confidence in the process, including as regards Kirkuk also in the light of the forthcoming Provincial Council elections across Iraq and the regional elections in the Kurdistan Region later this year.

Madame President,
The post-election phase represents a crucial time for Iraq. Building on the achievements of the current government, we urge political leaders to prioritise inclusive, non-sectarian dialogue, and to ensure the swift formation of a new truly national Government which reflects the will of the people of Iraq. It is essential that the new Government works as one across the sectarian and ethnic divides in pursuing much-needed political, economic and social reforms, based on the principles of patriotism and citizenship with equal rights, justice and opportunity for all and good governance while working to improve the economy, public services delivery and social justice. A new government, based on such an approach, will guarantee the future of Iraq as a stable, prosperous, united, democratic, fully sovereign and independent federal state with good and balanced relations with all its neighbours based on mutual respect, non-interference, and common interests as a factor for stability, cooperation and prosperity, also in the region.

Madame President,

Although Da'esh's so-called caliphate has been defeated, the terrorist organisation continues to pose a threat. For example, on 12 April, 20 people were killed and four wounded in a twin attack with improvised explosive devices in Shirqat district, Salah al-Din governorate. On 16 May, the eve of the Holy month of Ramadan, Da'esh fighters opened indiscriminate fire on civilians at a funeral in Tarmiya, southern Salah al-Din governorate, killing 12 and wounding 25. On May 24, a terrorist bombing targeted a crowded park in Baghdad as people were on outings after breaking the Ramadan fast, killing or injuring 20, and just yesterday, a bomb detonated near a girls’ school in Diyala governorate,
killing or injuring a number of people. These cowardly and indiscriminate attacks have the sole purpose of inflicting maximum casualties among innocent civilians. In addition, explosives reportedly planted by Da’esh have continued to cause civilian casualties, notably in Kirkuk, Ninawa and Anbar governorates, as a sad legacy of the terrorist organisation’s former presence.

As a result of these attacks and other incidents, I regret to inform you that 144 civilians were killed between 1 April and 30 May, and 236 others wounded. I note that civilian casualties in April constitute the lowest monthly civilian casualty figures in Iraq since UNAMI began publishing monthly figures in 2012, and the lowest since my Human Rights Office began publicly reporting on human rights in Iraq in August 2005. I see no room for complacency, however, and I reaffirm my support to the Iraqi authorities in their efforts to thwart terrorist attempts to destroy, destabilise and divide communities across Iraq and urge them to forge close cooperation with citizens and local communities in this regard.

Madame President,

Iraqi Security Forces maintained constant pressure on the remaining Da’esh presence and activities across North, Central and West Iraq in the past two months through successive security clearance operations. Building on a re-established footprint in towns, villages and rural regions, these operations have expanded the engagement of the Iraqi Security Forces on the ground and have projected intent and capability in pursuing the remnant Da’esh presence, improving the overall security environment and clearing more civilian settlements and main roads of explosive remnants-of-war. These security
operations have seen some substantive successes, including the safe conduct of the Imam Musa Al-Khadem anniversary in central Iraq in April and an effective Iraq-wide security plan during parliamentary elections in May. Challenges in the post-election period will include promoting civil peace and calm during the process of government formation; and ensuring that the incoming government engages in measures to reform and rehabilitate its security sector, putting it firmly under the state control and acting resolutely against unruly armed, often criminal formations and groups outside its control.

In an effort to combat the threat emanating from the western deserts and from across the Syrian border, the Iraqi Security Forces have remained deployed along the Iraqi-Syrian border in force and have carried out multiple clearance operations in western Anbar governorate to locate and destroy terrorist cells. Within the past several weeks, the Iraqi Air Force launched three strikes on Da’esh targets inside Syria, coordinated with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and with the International Coalition to Counter ISIL. On 15 May, Prime Minister Abadi announced that the Iraqi intelligence and security services had apprehended five senior Da’esh leaders.

On 29 April, the Director of Finance of the Popular Mobilisation Commission, Qassim Da’if al-Zubaidi, was attacked by unidentified assailants in front of his house in Baghdad. He succumbed to his injuries the following day. The Iraqi authorities have initiated an investigation.

Turkish military airstrikes on alleged Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) targets near the Iraqi-Turkish border in northern Iraq, with limited ground operations in the Hakurk area in northern Erbil governorate, have increased over
the past few months including most recently on 15, 17, 18 and 21 May, with two Turkish soldiers killed during the latter one.

Madame President,

Negotiations to promote the normalisation of relations between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan regional Government in Erbil were largely suspended over the electoral campaign period. However, I am glad to note that several of the measures placed on the Kurdistan Region following its unilateral referendum on independence have been lifted, including the reopening of international airports in Erbil and Sulaimaniya, and further dialogue on payment of civil service salaries is required to address outstanding issues, including oil and gas management and revenues, the disputed internal boundaries, as well as the status of Kirkuk. In this regard, I note the Federal Supreme Court’s announcement on 6 May, of postponement of its hearing on the legality of the independent oil exports by the Kurdistan Region’s Ministry of Natural Resources.

UNAMI, under my Deputy for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, has been holding meetings with political parties and key political figures in the Kurdistan Region, in the presence of representatives of the electoral commission and the police, in the framework of the Kurdistan Region Electoral Charter of Honour. The latest meeting took place in Erbil on 17 May to discuss concerns over conduct of the elections, during which my Deputy urged parties to submit their complaints to the electoral commission and the Electoral Judicial Panel.
I note that many of these parties have made a commitment to seek strong co-ordinated Kurdish representation in the next Council of Representatives and the federal government, and to seek full implementation of the Constitution to address outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil.

On 7 May, Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani called for Kurdistan Regional elections to be held on 30 September 2018. Given the controversies around the CoR elections, the regional Kurdistan High Electoral and Referendum Commission has on 28 May decided not to use electronic voting and tabulation machines. I urge the Kurdistan Regional Parliament to take immediate action to pass the required electoral legislation. UNAMI stands ready to advise and support that electoral process, in accordance with our mandate.

Madame President,

Recovery involves rebuilding society, in addition to reconstruction. I recently visited several historic and religious sites notably in Ninawa and Salah al-Din to show support for the country’s rich and diverse religious and cultural heritage and United Nations engagement with its restoration post-Da’esh.

With the restoration of security in the country and following the Kuwait International Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Iraq held in February 2018, Prime Minister Abadi launched on 9 May the National Development Plan 2018 – 2022, which incorporates the priorities of the reconstruction and development framework 2018-2027 and the poverty reduction strategy 2018-2022.
In that context, the UN System in Iraq has commenced preparation for a new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2020-2024) to align its interventions with the new Government priorities, with a focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this connection, the UNDAF Roadmap has been adopted by the UN Country Team and the Regional Peer Support and, subsequently, the data collection phase of the Common Country Analysis has started. In the interim period before the implementation of the new UNDAF, the UN Country Team will focus its interventions on the UN’s two-year Recovery and Resilience Programme, designed to fast-track the social dimension of the Government Reconstruction Programme.

Madame President,

The United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Stabilisation continued its work to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. This was achieved through reconnecting communities to the electricity grid, rehabilitating water and sewage systems, roads and bridges, and providing short-term employment through public works schemes in areas directly impacted by Da’esh. With over 2,100 stabilisation projects, the Facility is working in 31 liberated cities and districts, notably in Ninawa, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk governorates.

In Mosul, where over 700 projects are underway, work completed at the Al Zahoor and Al Sahiron water treatment plants has increased water production capacity to serve almost 500,000 people. The rehabilitation of the Sayedatee Al
Jamila bridge has reconnected two commercially vibrant neighbourhoods of Mosul, allowing 4,500 vehicles to cross daily and improving access for the city’s 1.4 million residents. The restored Al Hebda Women’s Dormitory at Mosul University now provides accommodation for 1,000 students, the only such facility for female students at the university. In the Ninawa Plains, work on 880 housing units has been completed; in Anbar governorate, 3,600 homes were rehabilitated, in total providing housing for over 25,000 people.

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues, despite the increase in families returning to their communities. Displacement peaked at the end of April 2016, when 3.4 million people were forced to leave their homes. Two years on, more than 2.1 million people remain displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. Funding to provide the most vulnerable with emergency support is, however, at critically low levels. Out of the required US$569 million in the Humanitarian Response Plan, only $101 million in donor contributions (18%) was received as of 15 May. I therefore appeal to the donor community to extend their generosity to the people of Iraq, recognizing the immense burden they have shouldered on behalf of us all in their heroic fight and victory against Da’esh.

The returns process of displaced families remains fluid. From 31 March until 30 April, over 75,000 displaced people returned to mainly four governorates - Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Anbar. However, new and secondary displacements are also being recorded. For example, by the end of April, almost 51,000 displaced people arrived back at camps in Ninawa, of which almost 27,000 people are secondary displacements. The main reasons for secondary displacement of families are lack of basic services and livelihoods.
opportunities in their places of origin, as well as security concerns and explosive hazard contamination.

The Directorate of Mine Action of the Iraq government, supported by member states, is making progress in its efforts to increase the number of explosive hazard clearance operators in Iraq. Four international NGOs are now in the process of preparing for operational activities in Iraq, including in underserved areas such as Kirkuk, Sinjar and Tal Afar. In addition, UNMAS, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq, has increased the range of its destruction of explosive items, notably clearing improvised explosive devices under water at the Iron Bridge in Fallujah to enable UNDP rehabilitation work. In particular, I salute the courage, resilience and humanity of the highly-skilled clearance operators who remove unstable explosive suicide belts, approximately 200 since the start of 2018, from human remains in the Old City of Mosul.

In April, the first governorate returns committees were established for Anbar, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, to facilitate a dignified and collaborative returns process. Further committees for Baghdad and Ninawa are expected to be established shortly. Composed of the Government, non-governmental organizations and United Nations representatives, the committees aim to ensure the return of displaced people is voluntary, safe and dignified, and also address the needs of displaced people remaining in camps by relocating them to camps with better services, fewer protection violations and to which humanitarian actors have better access.
During the recent electoral process, I regret to report, humanitarian partners recorded several suspected cases of politicization of humanitarian assistance in camps across the country, allegedly committed by law enforcement authorities and local aid workers. These allegations were brought to the attention of the Independent High Electoral Commission, while humanitarian partners continue to monitor and advocate for the civilian and humanitarian character of camps. A continued military presence in camps across Iraq, the sexual harassment of women and girls, diversion of humanitarian assistance, detention and disappearance of camp residents, recruitment activities inside the camps and armed actors’ attacks on humanitarian staff, despite the Prime Minister’s 2017 directive on the civilian character of camps, remain deeply concerning.

On 12 April, Amnesty International issued a report which concluded that Iraqi women and children with perceived ties to Da’esh experience serious protection issues in camps, including denial of assistance; restrictions on freedom of movement; and sexual harassment, rape and sexual exploitation. The humanitarian community condemns these human rights violations in the strongest terms, including any form of sexual exploitation and abuse of displaced people and refugees. In 2016, the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Network in Iraq was set up as the primary mechanism to raise awareness, build capacity, enable reporting, referral and follow-up and to provide victim support. All cases of alleged misconduct reported to the PSEA Network in the first four months of this year have been referred to the Iraqi authorities, UN or NGO agencies for investigation. The Network collaborates with the IDP call centre, which serves as a community-based complaints mechanism for handling sexual exploitation and abuse cases. I wish to underline
that UNAMI is engaged, with our humanitarian partners, in an urgent investigation of reported situations.

Madame President,

The government of Iraq continues to reach out to its neighbours and the international community, to build cooperation in fighting and countering terrorism and extremism in the region. Officials from the International Coalition against ISIL collaborate closely with Iraqi counterparts and politicians working to eradicate residual threats in the country and to build the capacity of Iraqi forces to counter violent Da’esh elements seeking to stage a resurgence, predominantly from hideouts across the border in Syria.

More broadly, Iraq has built stronger bilateral relations with neighbouring states in the region, moving towards common goals and working together in various fields, including the economy, education and security. More than 960 electoral observers from the region and internationally came to Iraq to assist in observing the elections process. Technical and security cooperation between Iraq and regional states continues to be enhanced. Stability in Iraq is inseparable from sustainable peace and prosperity in the region and vice versa. Continued commitments from the governments in the region and the international community to assist Iraq in the reconstruction of the country remain key at this time of transition to stability and the consolidation of democracy.

Madame President,
I turn briefly to some further human rights issues on which my Mission is currently focusing. On 16 April, the Ministry of Justice announced that 13 executions have taken place thus far in 2018, including eleven for terrorism-related crimes. This was the first time in 2018 that Iraqi authorities have reported executions.

On 8 January, the Council of Representatives formed an investigative committee to examine potential human rights violations committed in last October in Tuz Khurmatu. Membership of the investigative committee was finalised in March. I look forward to the release of its Terms of Reference and subsequent findings, with a view to those assessed responsible being held fully accountable.

On 6 April, in Mosul city, a mass grave containing 22 bodies of former security personnel and Independent High Electoral Commission employees was discovered. On 2 April, in southern Mosul district, a mass grave containing 51 bodies of Iraqi security forces was discovered. Both mass graves reportedly contain victims of Da’esh. At least 122 mass graves have been discovered since June 2014, and the overwhelming majority are believed to contain victims of Da’esh. Systematic preservation and excavation of these sites remains critical, given that they may contain evidence of the perpetrators of these crimes, but also important evidence of the identities of the victims.

Following the approval by the UN Security Council of the Terms of Reference for the UN Investigative Team to be established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), a UN assessment mission led by UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares visited Iraq at the
beginning of April. The Secretary-General intends to take expeditiously the next steps that will lead to establishment of the Investigative Team.

Madame President,

Allow me to use this opportunity to extend my thanks to the Government of Iraq for finalising the membership of the High Level National Committee for Monitoring and Reporting Violations Against Children. I encourage the new Government to continue working with my team on the development of an Action Plan to address the use and recruitment of children, for which Iraq was listed in the 2016 Children and Armed Conflict Annual report. I hope that we can collectively work on developing and strengthening the tools and mechanisms in place for the protection of children in Iraq who have been affected by the armed conflict.

Before concluding, I would like to also note, that following the Independent External Assessment of UNAMI, the Secretary–General in his letter of 17 May provided an update on implementation of its recommendations. As requested by the Security Council, as part of my briefing I am distributing a vision paper with short and long-term priorities and objectives of the Mission and the UN Country Team that also includes division of labour among the different UN entities. These priorities and objectives will be further discussed with the Security Council and the new government of Iraq, with the aim of achieving alignment between the needs of the country and the activities and work of the UN.

Madame President,
Allow me to now turn to the eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

The Iraqi Ministry of Defence continues to undertake proactive efforts in carrying out excavation and exploration missions, as well as in collecting information to complement the search for missing Kuwaiti persons. Commitment for action persists, but the need to adopt fresh and innovative ways to take the file forward is evident from the lack of tangible results.

In April, for the second time in 15 years, Iraq hosted meetings of the Tripartite mechanism, demonstrating its commitment to the missing persons file and a steady return to normality. The discussions held among the Tripartite members were constructive and forward-looking. Focusing primarily on the recommendations of the ICRC review project, agreements were reached on how best to reinvigorate the search.

I am grateful for the positive response received towards the proposals tabled by UNAMI during these meetings, namely a pilot project to conduct mass grave site surveys in Iraq with the help of the UN Global Service Centre in Brindisi. In line with the multifaceted approach advocated by the ICRC review project, the pilot project would also encompass training and capacity-building of the technical teams on the use of Ground Penetrating Radar and data analysis. I hope that the outcomes and agreements stemming from the latest Tripartite mechanism meetings will translate into positive outcomes.
While the Government of Iraq bears primary responsibility for this work, I would like to use this occasion to call upon the international community to consider how it might further support these activities. More particularly, I draw attention to the need for Member States in possession of relevant satellite imagery from 1990-1991 to come forward and provide analysis and information to the Government of Iraq that could assist in identification of burial locations. Procurement of field equipment, as well as provision of forensic, DNA, and anthropological trainings and capacity-building for Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams are equally important in moving this file forward.

It is paramount that despite challenges and the accumulated frustration from lack of results, we do not lose sight of the ultimate goal, which is to provide the families of the missing with answers about the fate of their loved ones.

Madam President,

The missing Kuwaiti property file has unfortunately not registered any progress during this period. UNAMI has been meeting with the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss how best we can support and facilitate the repatriation of already located Kuwaiti property, which has been pending for over a year. I would like to reiterate the call to both Iraq and Kuwait to reach an agreement on the date of the official handover. UNAMI stands ready to provide logistical support and observe the process.

In conclusion, I urge the Government of Iraq to explore new strategies to revive this file and fulfil its obligations, under this file.