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SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR IRAQ

الممثل الخاص للأمين العام للأمم المتحدة في العراق

## **Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq Ján Kubiš**

**New York, 13 November 2018**

Mr. President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

Following the certification of the election results on 19 August, the government formation process moved forward with the election of Mohammad al-Halbousi as Speaker of the Council of Representatives on 15 September, and Barham Salih as President of Iraq on 2 October, who then nominated Mr. Adel Abdul Mahdi, as Prime Minister-designate.

On 24 October, the Iraqi Parliament reviewed the new governmental programme, endorsed 14 out of 22 Cabinet ministers, and confirmed Mr. Abdul-Mahdi as Prime Minister. Of the five sovereign ministries, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Oil were endorsed, but the ministries of Defence and Interior are yet to be allocated. No female or minority



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candidates were appointed to ministerial positions, but the PM intends to consider them for governmental posts and other key positions in subsequent rounds of government formation.

Mr. President,

While the government formation process has not been without controversy, the political blocs have demonstrated a willingness to act in support of the Prime Minister. Competition and differences have been largely political and not sectarian, and in this way, a break from the past. The guidance of the Supreme Shia religious authority Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani has significantly influenced the process. The main negotiations with PM Abdul-Mahdi have been led by cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr (Sai'roun) and Mr. Hadi al-Ameri (Fateh) on behalf of their alliances – Islah and Binaa respectively. All of these primary partners and political forces now share a responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the new PM and government to deliver on its programme, and for its stability. The support of all the political forces represented in parliament will be essential, including those who will now be in the opposition, for



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the first time since 2003. Barring this, Iraq's political forces and leaders will fail their people.

Mr. President,

The Government's programme, which includes advisory inputs from the UN represents a general outline of a national project to respond to the needs and demands of the Iraqi people. As stated in the programme, its focus and pillar should be the citizen. The programme outlines specific plans for reforms, investment and the private sector, and for transitioning Iraq from a crisis context to sustainable development, recommends steps to tackle corruption across all sectors, and sets out a framework to guide the planning and work of each ministry. In addition to delivering tangible improvements in the daily lives of Iraqi citizens, a key focus area of the programme includes job creation for the unemployed, and young people in particular. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of liberated areas and the return of IDPs are also key priorities. The programme aims at strengthening security, fighting terrorism, enhancing law and order and the rule of law, i.a. by putting all arms under the strict control of the State. It also stresses the prevention of militia formation outside the framework



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of the State, and the withdrawal of troops from the cities. The programme confirms that special attention will be given to resolving pending challenges with the Kurdistan Region, including the issues of budget allocation and financial resources, oil and disputed areas.

Mr. President,

I commend the exemplary democratic transfer of power between the outgoing Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, and incoming Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi. At the handover ceremony on 25 October, Mr. Abadi recalled the achievements of his government in defeating Da'esh and uniting the country based on the Constitution, at a time when the economic situation deteriorated due to deep-rooted corruption and a massive decrease in oil prices. He recalled the return of millions of displaced families to liberated areas and the establishment of a national army and security forces. He also noted improved relations with all of Iraq's neighbours, including the Arab countries. Finally, he underlined that political processes in Iraq have witnessed a gradual departure from sectarian approaches and rhetoric. For all of this, he and his government,



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the Kurdistan regional government, diverse armed forces and formations, and the people of Iraq deserve acknowledgment and gratitude.

Iraq must now build on these foundations. The new Government intends to start immediately, particularly on the delivery of services and jobs, and justice, on reforming and energizing the economy, and effective governance, including fighting corruption and administrative red-tape. In this regard, Iraq will require and counts on the continued support of the international community. We must not let them down.

Mr. President,

On 30 October, the Kurdistan region parliamentary elections held on the 30 September were approved. The first session of the new KR Parliament took place on 6 November, but failed to elect its Speaker and the two deputies.

The dominant Kurdistan Democratic Party now intends to consult with all Kurdistan Region political parties, notably the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, on the government formation.



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Mr. President,

The new government of Iraq intends to introduce robust measures to further improve and achieve sustainable security throughout the country, intensifying efforts to uproot Da'esh terrorist cells to counter this insurgency. There are almost daily reports about arresting or eliminating Da'esh terrorists, their leaders, sleeper-cells and hide-outs.

Security measures put in place for the Arba'een pilgrimage were successful. Among the 15 million pilgrims, close to 2 million foreign visitors were recorded to have legally and safely entered Iraq. Efforts to disturb this massive movement of people failed.

Most Da'esh movements in recent months have been reportedly through the desert joining central Iraq and its Anbar and Ninewa provinces to the western border with Syria. In response, Iraq has deployed thousands of troops on its border with Syria to curb Da'esh, who remains in control of several areas across the borders in the Syrian Deir ez-Zor province. Also, Da'esh remains active in some other Iraqi provinces, notably in Kirkuk, Salah ad-Din and Diyala.



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Mr. President,

UNAMI continues to advocate for justice and accountability for international crimes. On the 6 of November, UNAMI and OHCHR jointly launched a report entitled “Unearthing Atrocities: Mass Graves in territory formerly controlled by ISIL.” At least 202 mass graves have been discovered in Iraq, believed to contain the remains of many thousands of victims of Da’esh-perpetrated atrocities.

I am pleased to advise that the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for Da’esh crimes (UNITAD), Mr. Karim Khan, has arrived in Iraq on 30 October.

Mr. President,

In October, UNAMI established a Women Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics in Iraq (WAG) that will serve as a political inclusion mechanism to ensure that the voices, concerns and experiences of Iraqi women are included in political processes that shape national reconciliation, based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity and non-discrimination.



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Mr. President,

Nearly two years after the defeat of Da'esh by Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition allies, more than 1.9 million Iraqis remain displaced, primarily in the north and west of the country. Although four million people have returned home since the end of the conflict, the rate of return has decreased significantly. Humanitarian actors and the UNAMI Senior Women's Protection Advisor are also concentrating on how to best strengthen the centrality of protection around women and children with perceived affiliations to extremist groups.

A critical barrier to the returns of IDPs is that the need for residential buildings to be cleared of mines by mine action actors remains unmet. The Funding Facility for Stabilization (or FFS) reached a significant milestone, having now completed 1,517 projects across all nine sectors of work in the five liberated governorates of the country. There are 245 new projects already tendered, but these will not be implemented without additional donor support.



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We also urge the Government to begin making its own contributions to donor-funded international development programmes including those under the FFS.

Mr. President,

The need for concrete results in public projects beyond the current focus on liberated areas is perhaps most evident in the southern city and province of Basra. There, a combination of water scarcity and high levels of contamination in drinking supplies led to more than 100,000 people being admitted to the hospital with gastroenteritis symptoms between mid-August and mid-October.

Mr. President,

On the 28 of October, the Government of Iraq chaired the first formal meeting of the Executive Committee on Recovery, Reconstruction and Development. This high-level committee is mandated to provide a coordination platform for strategic guidance on national priorities to take



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forward the work set out in the Kuwait Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq in February of this year. This signals a Government's determined shift towards development and investment.

Mr. President,

I am delighted to report that on 11 and 13 November 2018, after over a year of preparations, President Saleh and respectively Iraqi Foreign Ministry representatives delivered to the Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs numerous property items taken during the invasion of Kuwait, including a sword and a valuable painting, over 2,300 books, and an archive of Kuwait Television video tapes.

I welcome this clear indication of commitment by the Government of Iraq to resolving the complex file of outstanding issues with Kuwait. When I met the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mohammad Al-Hakim, on 5 November, he assured me of his highest attention to, and support for, efforts on this important file.



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Mr. President,

In conclusion, as this is my last report to you in my current capacity, I would like to express my gratitude to you and your predecessors, to the members of the Security Council for the support you have kindly provided to me during the 3 years and 9 months I have served in my tenure.

I would also like to express my highest appreciation to UNAMI and the UNCT staff, for their dedication, professionalism, proactive efforts and unwavering commitment to work in support of UNAMI's and UN mandates, serving Iraq and its people.

I would also like to express my gratitude to and appreciation of Madame Alice Walpole, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance and Madame Marta Ruedas, my Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs and Development, for their cooperation, capable leadership and management of UN activities across Iraq.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome my successor, Madame Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and wish her success in leading the Mission, in helping Iraq toward a durable and sustainable peace, stability and

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prosperity for its people. I encourage the authorities and society of Iraq to offer Madame Hennis-Plasschaert the same generous support and cooperation that they have shown to me during my tenure.

I have had the honour of serving the UN and Iraq during a particularly difficult period that has against all odds and scepticism ended well, with a promising future prospect for the country and its people. Iraq is a success, a positive story, in the region marked by many negative trends and developments. The UN in Iraq has shown its relevance and will continue to build on the firm foundations of its strong partnership with Iraq and its people. Thank you, Mr. President.