



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9803rd meeting

Friday, 6 December 2024, 10.20 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Wood/Ms. Shea (United States of America)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Gaouaoui
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Ms. Mendez Gruezo
France	Mr. Dharmadhikari
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mr. Mikanagi
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. George
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Forty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2024/844)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) (S/2024/857)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

24-38251 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Forty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2024/844)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) (S/2024/857)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Iraq and Kuwait to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq; and Ms. Hanaa Edwar, Chairperson of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2024/844, which contains the forty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013), and S/2024/857, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2732 (2024).

I now give the floor to Mr. Al Hassan.

Mr. Al Hassan (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour today to deliver my first briefing to the Security Council since I assumed the position of Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I would like to thank and express my appreciation to all the members of the Council, as well as the Secretary-General and the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait, for the confidence they have vested in me, of which I hope to be worthy.

I will start by saying that, as everyone has heard many times by now, today's Iraq is not the same as the Iraq of 20 years ago, or even five years ago. Despite the many obstacles facing it, Iraq today is more secure, stable and open. I have no doubt that the country,

which is deeply rooted in history and the cradle of human civilization, is capable of overcoming crises and addressing challenges with a view to forging a more secure, bright and hopeful future.

Since the previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.9628), in May, by my colleague Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who I would like to commend for all her sincere efforts to assist Iraq, there have been a number of positive developments, some of which I had the opportunity to witness myself, the most prominent of which are as follows.

The successful conduct of the national census on 20 November is one of the notable recent achievements in Iraq, which I had the opportunity to observe in person, together with the Prime Minister, Mr. Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani. It was the first nationwide, comprehensive census to include the Kurdistan region since 1987. Preliminary results indicate that Iraq's population has almost doubled in just over three decades, to more than 45 million. Decision-makers in Iraq will now be able to plan based on reliable facts and figures.

(spoke in English)

Another key development, after a year of vacancy and various unsuccessful attempts, was the election of a new Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq on 31 October, an important step taken to foster parliamentary dialogue on legislation that was urgently needed to address the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people. Prime Minister Al Sudani is committed to improving services and continues to invest heavily in major infrastructure projects throughout Iraq, including through the construction and development of roads, bridges, schools and transportation networks, which are aimed at improving services, creating job opportunities and improving the lives of the Iraqi people.

In a region that is "on fire", Iraq's Government has shown strong resolve to keep the country out of the widening regional conflicts, while standing firm as a strong voice for regional peace and stability. Prime Minister Al Sudani has consistently called for an end to regional tensions, stressing the need for respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Looking beyond the current conflicts, the Government of Iraq is also striving to position the country as a vital corridor for transportation, energy and trade, while leveraging regional partnerships. Such initiatives underscore Iraq's efforts to foster regional integration and prosperity.

Positive progress was also made in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. After two years of protracted negotiations and delays, parliamentary elections were held in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, thereby re-establishing the legitimacy of the region's institutions. On 20 October, I witnessed at first hand the well-organized and smooth voting operations in some of the more than 7,000 polling stations in Erbil and Dohuk. With more than 2 million people casting their votes, voter turnout reached 72 per cent, an increase of 12 per cent over the previous elections. The electoral assistance provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was widely recognized by regional and federal authorities, including the Independent High Electoral Commission, and was instrumental in instilling trust and strengthening Iraq's technical capacities for elections, something of which the United Nations should be very proud. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Iraq, the United Nations and the UNAMI electoral staff for their dedicated efforts.

It is also important to note that women managed to secure 31 of the 100 parliamentary seats, which exceeds the minimum required quota of 30 per cent. While negotiations among political parties for the formation of the new regional Government in Kurdistan are under way, political parties have a responsibility to enable women's access to political positions and provide a seat at the table for them. Meanwhile, the visit of Prime Minister Al Sudani to Erbil following the elections was an important step towards promoting joint dialogue to address the many important issues outstanding between the two sides.

Those are all positive developments, but they are tempered by the threat posed by persistent and systemic corruption, despite the Government's efforts to address them. While public debate on corruption is frequent in Iraq and politicians engage widely on the topic, the issue continues to prevail in Iraq's socioeconomic life. The country requires comprehensive changes and reforms that will bolster accountability, promote competency, improve transparency and fortify governance systems. I am fully confident that the Government is taking promising steps in that direction.

While strengthening State institutions to tackle corruption is crucial, bolstering State institutions and promoting and supporting human rights are all the more important in a country that is moving away from its dark past. That requires strong institutions that safeguard the people's fundamental rights and freedoms. Given the

critical role of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, Iraq's constitutionally mandated national human rights institution, it is regrettable that the selection of a new Board of Commissioners is still pending. Iraq's constructive engagement with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in August was a positive step. What is important now is for Iraq to implement the Committee's recommendations, a critical step towards strengthening the protection of Iraq's rich diversity. I am truly confident and a strong believer in Iraq's ability to do so.

An issue that has generated a lot of public debate and international attention concerns the proposed amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law — which is a key undertaking that could have far-reaching implications for women and children. We have extensively engaged with Iraqi stakeholders, emphasizing the need for a constructive and inclusive dialogue on the issue. We have further stressed that any reforms to the Personal Status Law should be in alignment with Iraq's international human rights commitments and obligations. I am also confident in Iraq's ability to ensure that.

In a country seeking to heal from internal conflicts and terrorism, a core and crucial question is that of justice and accountability. Amendments to the General Amnesty Law are currently being debated in the Council of Representatives of Iraq. Provisions for amnesty can be a pathway to promoting reconciliation and redressing the grievances of the unjustly imprisoned. To be clear, those responsible for atrocities should be brought to justice. At the same time, justice should be delivered in a fair and proportionate manner.

Unfortunately, the impact of Da'esh in Iraq is still visible in the camps hosting thousands of displaced persons, a majority of them Yazidis. I myself have witnessed first-hand the harsh living conditions that they continue to endure. That is unacceptable, and Iraq can do better. Iraq is capable of treating its citizens better and providing its people with a better environment. I am quite certain that Iraq will be able to provide better living conditions for those who are victims first and foremost. My heart and solidarity go out to the Yazidis and all the others who have been displaced for so many years. They deserve better. The Prime Minister's decision to establish a national high committee, in consultation with the United Nations, to tackle the issue of displacement is a step in the right direction. However, it is not enough. The State needs to

invest concretely in creating the conditions necessary for the return of displaced persons, Yazidis and others. Four years after its signature, the Sinjar Agreement has yet to be fully implemented. As has been said before, a unified administration in Sinjar and stable security structures are the only way to create conducive conditions for returnees.

Let us not forget the Iraqi citizens still in Al-Hol camp in north-east Syria. Iraq is one of the very few countries exerting commendable efforts to repatriate their citizens. I saw for myself the support provided by the Government of Iraq, United Nations agencies and partners to the thousands of people who are returning to a safe Iraq after a prolonged period of displacement and suffering. More, though, needs to be done to accelerate the return of the people in the hellish conditions in Al-Hol. We have a renewed commitment from the Iraqi Government and its institutions to repatriate Iraqi citizens from Al-Hol and other camps in north-eastern Syria, hopefully before the end of 2025. That said, any other country with nationals in Al-Hol has the same duty to act and take back its citizens.

(spoke in Arabic)

Since I assumed my post, my colleagues and I have worked actively to build trust and strengthen bilateral relations between Iraq and the State of Kuwait. We have therefore strongly encouraged the continuation of negotiations and communications on the demarcation of the maritime border between the two neighbouring brother countries. We have also expressed the willingness of UNAMI and the entire United Nations to lend our good offices, should both sides choose to avail themselves of that assistance.

On the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, UNAMI has continued to participate as an observer in the work of the Tripartite Mechanism chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross. After more than three decades, I can say definitively that we need to intensify sincere efforts to identify and excavate potential burial sites, in line with the agreed-upon mechanisms. That is an essential demand by the families of the missing persons, because they have had to wait so long to learn the fate of their loved ones — an issue of paramount importance to Kuwait's leadership, Government and people. We hope that we will see those concerned make true and tangible efforts to address that file. We also call for expediting steps to search for, identify and ensure the return of missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. We must turn

the page on that file in order to enable both countries and their neighbouring peoples to resume relations at all levels. In that context, I should mention the Iraqi Federal Court's ruling issued in 2023, which was not at all appropriate and did considerable damage to Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. I would therefore like to note that we are working closely with the competent and responsible authorities in Iraq to restore trust between the two countries. We hope that those involved in Iraq will be able to correct that path as soon as possible and in a way that best serves the interests of both countries.

(spoke in English)

I would like to say a few final words about UNAMI's transition and liquidation plan, as requested by resolution 2732 (2024). While UNAMI continues to ensure the delivery of its mandate, we are working closely with the Government of Iraq, the United Nations country team and United Nations Headquarters to finalize the plan for submission to the Council by 31 December. Together with the United Nations country team, the Mission is also taking steps to enable the transfer of relevant tasks to the forthcoming Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Iraq.

I want to take this opportunity to stress to the Council the importance of allocating UNAMI's full budget for 2025, which is crucial if the Mission is to be able to deliver on its mandate and carry out its transition and drawdown process as smoothly as possible and according to the time frame set out in resolution 2732 (2024). I apologize for speaking at length.

(spoke in Arabic)

In conclusion, I would like to note that I have no doubt at all that Iraq's leaders are well aware of the challenges facing their country and the steps that they must take to save their ancient country, so pivotal in the Middle East, from any problems. That would establish a new phase that focuses on the future in order to restore the positive and pivotal role in the region and the world of Iraq — one of the founding States Members of the United Nations.

In that regard, I would like to outline the principles that resulted from my meeting with the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani in Najaf on 4 November: first, ensuring the competence and integrity of those who assume public office in Iraq; secondly, upholding good-neighbourliness and preventing foreign interference; thirdly, upholding the rule of law; fourthly, restricting arms to State control; and fifthly, fighting corruption

at all levels. Those are principles that have been widely welcomed by political stakeholders in Iraq, as they represent a road map for the country. As we move towards the Mission's transition, we stress that UNAMI and the United Nations stand ready to help Iraq in its efforts to build a new, safe and prosperous Iraq. I would also like to express my genuine pleasure in working with the current Iraqi Government and Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani during the time remaining of the Mission's deployment, which has seen its employees sacrificing their lives to help Iraq.

The President: I thank Mr. Al Hassan for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Edwar.

Ms. Edwar (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this important international forum as a representative of Iraqi civil society.

On 21 November, the Iraqi Government completed the national census for the first time after more than 25 years. Its initial findings indicate that Iraq's population now exceeds 45 million people, half of whom are women and a third of whom are children. The average size of a household is 5.3 persons, while 60.2 per cent of the population are between the ages of 15 and 64, which is the working age. The Prime Minister said that the results reveal that Iraq has entered a demographic surge phase, as the percentage of the working age population has reached 60 per cent. Will the demographic windfall be a golden opportunity for Iraq's future? Or will it be a missed opportunity due to the quota system, the lack of strategic planning, mismanagement, the dependence of the country's economy on oil revenues and the networks of corruption that have become entrenched in State institutions and have led to the deterioration of public services, in addition to the presence of non-State armed actors, the lack of accountability and the lack of oversight with impunity? The country's sovereignty has also been undermined by ongoing foreign, military and security intervention, with high levels of unemployment, especially among young people, as well as the serious threats posed by climate change, water scarcity and environmental pollution. All those factors play a role in the fragility of the system and the political process. Moreover, people's mistrust of the ruling class and public institutions has also deepened.

In the light of those crisis conditions in a country that is rich in resources, Iraqi women are facing worrisome social and legislative challenges, with a

significant increase in violent crimes, sexual violence and human trafficking, in addition to the spread of hate speech, marginalization and discrimination, the increasing levels of poverty and begging, the extremely weak social welfare system and the lack of protection mechanisms and psychological, health and legal services for female survivors and vulnerable families. Furthermore, there is a low level of participation of Iraqi women aged 15 and older in the workforce, at only 10.6 per cent. More specifically, less than 1 million women are currently employed, the majority of them in the public sector, in particular in the education and services sectors.

Last year, we faced a systematic Government campaign to ban the term "gender" in State institutions and documents, which subsequently led to the change of the name of the mechanism responsible for women to become the National Office for Women's Affairs. The use of the term was also prohibited by researchers and civil society organizations under the pretext that it contradicts the religious and social values of our country. The campaign was also accompanied by efforts to curtail the activities of civil society organizations, restrict their freedoms of expression and assembly, question their activities and accuse them and their affiliates of treason and working for foreign parties and promoting moral and social decay. Those efforts were widely disseminated on social media and through other media outlets.

Three months ago, a proposal to amend the Personal Status Law — Law 188 of 1959 — was suddenly placed on the agenda of the House of Representatives, based on the provisions of Islamic sharia law. Law 188 is one of the most important laws that have contributed to the stability of the religious, sectarian and national diversity of Iraqi society. It guarantees personal and religious rights and the rights of women and children. It also provides a guarantee for the free choice of the doctrine on which any marriage is contracted by agreement between two parties. It also aligns with the international human rights conventions to which Iraq is a party. The proposed amendments would undermine all such foundations, while replacing them with doctrinal codes of unknown content and opening the door to different jurisprudential interpretations from the pre-State era. They would contradict the principles of human rights, especially women and children's rights, as they abolish a woman's rights to divorce, alimony, custody and inheritance. They would legalize child marriage and marriage outside civil courts, which

contradict Iraq's international obligations pursuant to its Constitution. The amendments would also contradict the principles of the Iraqi Constitution, which affirms equal citizenship before the law, the preservation of the dignity of women and children and the protection of the family and society from fragmentation. The amendments would also threaten the jurisdiction of the courts as the ultimate authority, not to mention the constitutional violations represented by voting on jurisprudential codes that have not been seen to become law in force before their content is identified or discussed by the House of Representatives. That would set a dangerous precedent that would depart from known legislative contexts.

United Nations experts have expressed grave concern regarding the proposed amendments to the Personal Status Law, since they represent a grave setback in several essential areas that would negatively affect women and children, in particular with regard to marriage, divorce and child custody. If adopted, they would probably exacerbate various forms of violence against Iraqi women and girls. The experts have warned that if adopted, the amendments would have a negative impact reverberating throughout Iraqi society and would undermine Iraq's commitment to the equal treatment of women and girls and the provision of protection for children's rights.

On behalf of my colleagues in Coalition 188 defending the existing personal status law, I would like to convey our demands through the Security Council to the authorities concerned in Iraq.

First, we ask them to immediately withdraw the proposed amendment and not to vote on it, especially because it is part of a political deal to get controversial laws, such as the law on general amnesty, passed together as a package. That would mean a trade-off in which prisoners accused of terrorism and corruption would be released while women would be incarcerated in male slavery prisons.

Secondly, we want to emphasize that defending the existing law means defending Iraq's permanent Constitution, the civil State and equal citizenship, against the fragmentation, backwardness and sectarian isolation that have been weakening our country and society for the past two decades.

Thirdly, we ask them to initiate serious, expanded discussions to review the problematic aspects of the current law at the national, official and community

levels, in line with the Iraqi Constitution. That would lead to amendments that can be implemented and enhance domestic safety and a diversified social fabric.

Fourthly, we condemn the efforts to silence those who oppose the proposed amendments on illegal pretexts. At the same time, we reiterate the importance of respecting freedom of expression and opinion throughout all the various media outlets, along with freedom of association and peaceful assembly, as stipulated by the Constitution. We call on the law-enforcement and judicial authorities to take the necessary measures to hold accountable institutions and individuals who launch false accusations, make threats and tarnish the reputation of activists who oppose the amendments.

Fifthly, we ask for the enactment of laws against domestic violence and in support of child protection along with the amendment of the penal code. That needs to be done urgently to improve national legislation.

Sixthly, the Government should commit to its international obligations regarding human rights, peacebuilding and sustainable development by implementing policies and national plans and programmes, and thereby enhancing effective partnerships with civil society organizations.

In conclusion, the women of Iraq will not allow what has been built by previous generations to be destroyed. We will not go back. We will continue our struggle, men and women alike, to achieve the change we all desire, that of building a State that embraces diversity and social justice.

The President: I thank Ms. Edwar for her statement.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely Algeria, Sierra Leone and my own country, Mozambique, together with Guyana (A3+). We thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar, President of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, for her informative briefing. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Kuwait and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq in today's meeting. We would also like to warmly welcome and express our profound gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United

Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for his comprehensive and insightful briefing to the Security Council. The A3+ would like to express its unwavering support to Mr. Al Hassan. We commend his excellent leadership skills, along with the tireless efforts of the United Nations staff in Iraq.

We commend the Government of Iraq, led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, for its sustained efforts to address the country's most pressing challenges. The adoption of the 2024 federal budget law, the holding of parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region, the election of the Speaker of the Iraq Parliament and the Government's efforts in the area of economic reform and the delivery of public services are laudable. The A3+ encourages all stakeholders to continue working together for the benefit of the people of Iraq. The country's high voter turnout testifies to the growing public trust in democratic institutions. In order to sustain that momentum, all parties must prioritize the establishment of an inclusive and effective governance system in accordance with the national laws of Iraq.

The plight of an estimated 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq remains a critical humanitarian issue. The efforts by the National High Committee and through the Government's collaboration with the United Nations, the implementation of effective measures such as documentation access, closures and reintegration policy development and humanitarian assistance to ensure the safe and voluntary return of IDPs are commendable. Those are essential measures for national stability. The A3+ commends Iraq's leadership in repatriating citizens from the Al-Hol camp in Syria, establishing a pathway to alleviating human suffering and addressing the ongoing crisis.

Despite the progress that has been made so far, the A3+ remains concerned about the prevailing security challenges facing Iraq, which are being exacerbated by regional tensions, particularly in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. We are of the view that Iraq's sovereignty must be respected amid the complex dynamics in the Middle East. The safety and security of the people of Iraq should not be imperilled by the activities of foreign actors. We therefore urge all actors to exercise maximum restraint, to work for de-escalation and to engage diplomatically to prevent further destabilization of the region. The A3+ firmly believes that securing an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, as well as full respect for the ceasefire in Lebanon, is crucial to achieving a lasting peace throughout the region.

At the same time, the transition from the Global Coalition against Da'esh to bilateral security partnerships is an encouraging sign of Iraq's growing capacity and self-reliance in combating terrorism and ensuring national and regional security. In our view, that transition must be carefully managed, adequately supported and aligned with Iraq's constitutional framework in order to preserve the gains made so far.

It is clear that Iraq faces significant challenges, including climate change and water scarcity, which have a negative impact on the people and the economy. We commend the efforts of the Iraqi Government to combat desertification, implement sustainable water and irrigation policies and increase green spaces. Addressing those challenges requires regional and international efforts in support of Iraq's adaptation to climate change and initiatives on renewable energy, such as those introduced by UNAMI. Human rights and legislative reforms, including amendments to the Personal Status Law, must align with international standards for the protection of women and children.

The A3+ commends the ongoing efforts of Iraq and Kuwait, supported by UNAMI and the international community, to address the outstanding issues, including the return of Kuwaiti property and the national archives and the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-party nationals or their remains. The A3+ looks forward to engaging constructively in discussions on the recommendations that the Secretary-General is expected to submit by 31 May 2025. We are certain that those recommendations will outline an appropriate follow-up mechanism to ensure continued progress in the event that those issues remain unresolved upon the termination of UNAMI's mandate. Further progress in investigations and the use of advanced techniques is necessary, although challenges related to delays in DNA testing and procedural inconsistencies may remain. We commend the continued efforts between the two countries through the Tripartite Commission and the United Nations follow-up mechanism. We welcome their dedication and call for international technical support. The A3+ emphasizes the urgency of excavation activities, timely results and a focus on priority sites in order to bring this task to closure and alleviate the affected families. We call on the Government of Iraq to reinvigorate its efforts, in cooperation with Kuwait and other partners. We must ensure that those surviving loved ones of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals receive the closure that they deserve.

As UNAMI advances towards its closure, ensuring a smooth and well-coordinated transition is crucial. We welcome Iraq's commitment to providing the necessary logistical, technical and security support to facilitate that process. We also wish to acknowledge the efforts being made under resolution 2732 (2024), in particular the establishment of the integrated working group at Headquarters, which plays a vital role in coordinating transition planning and the orderly handover of responsibilities to United Nations entities and its strategic partners. Moreover, we acknowledge and appreciate the proactive steps taken by the Government of Iraq in establishing a dedicated committee to facilitate interactions with UNAMI's leadership on transition matters. Looking ahead to the finalization of UNAMI's transition and liquidation plan by 31 December, the A3+ emphasizes the importance of continued collaboration among UNAMI, the Government of Iraq and all stakeholders to ensure an effective and timely conclusion.

Algeria, Guyana, Sierra Leone and Mozambique encourage Iraq and Kuwait to continue to make progress on the outstanding issues through mutual respect and a commitment to the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and good neighbourliness. The international community will remain steadfast in supporting Iraq's efforts to achieve lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Al Hassan for his comprehensive briefing and Ms. Edwar for her valuable insights. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Iraq and Kuwait in this meeting.

The United Kingdom welcomes the United Nations transition planning and the cooperation between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). It is important for that transition to be conducted smoothly. We also welcome the holding of parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq on 20 October and UNAMI's support for the Independent High Electoral Commission in successfully conducting those elections. It serves as an important expression of the voice of the people of the Kurdistan region of Iraq and the continued democratic legitimacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Now that the results have been certified, we hope for a swift government formation process. We also hope that UNAMI will continue to work closely with the Independent High Electoral Commission in the final year of its mandate. Lessons learned from the Kurdistan

region of Iraq elections can inform the planning of federal elections scheduled for next year.

As a member of the Tripartite Commission for the Missing from the First Gulf War, chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Kingdom is committed to supporting the Kuwait missing persons and property file. We welcome Prime Minister Al Sudani's personal commitment to that issue and urge the Government of Iraq to redouble its efforts in line with resolution 2732 (2024). We hope that the transitional period provides Iraq with an opportunity to demonstrate tangible progress and we will work with Iraq, Kuwait and other parties to ensure a suitable follow-on mechanism, as appropriate. We are reviewing the proposed amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law and emphasize the importance of any amendments being compatible with Iraq's international obligations. Following recent events in Syria, we are concerned about the potential for further escalation in the region and its impact on Iraq and the Kurdistan region of Iraq. We urge those with influence to encourage militias based in Iraq to refrain from attacks, including on Israeli population centres, which risk further conflict. The United Kingdom will continue to press for de-escalation in the region to build on the current ceasefire in Lebanon and to push for an immediate ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza.

The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant closed in September. But Council members and Iraq have been clear that this does not signal the end of the fight for accountability against Da'esh. The United Kingdom shares that determination. Survivors and victims of Da'esh crimes deserve justice. The United Kingdom remains ready to support an enhanced United Nations archive and looks forward to hearing from the Government of Iraq on those efforts to ensure accountability for victims in Iraq and in third countries.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's commitment to the stability and security of Iraq and to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI for their efforts.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan for his briefing on the situation in the friendly Republic of Iraq, against the backdrop of the regional escalation of hostilities in the Middle East. We congratulate him on

his appointment to this esteemed position and extend our full support. We also thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her briefing.

We are heartened to hear that, despite the socioeconomic challenges in the context of growing tensions around the Republic of Iraq, the country has functioning State institutions and is capable of independently tackling the emerging challenges it faces.

In that context, we applaud the steps taken by the Office of Prime Minister Mohammed Al Sudani to stabilize the internal political situation and improve the effectiveness of Iraqi governing bodies, including at the provincial and local levels. That is attested to by the successful holding, on 20 October 2024, of parliamentary elections in the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq and the election of a new Speaker of the Council of Representatives. We trust that all Iraqi political forces will strive to resolve their differences exclusively through dialogue and in the interests of all ethno-religious communities and population groups. We consistently and steadfastly support the promotion of dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil on all outstanding contentious and unresolved issues.

We note in particular the positive trends in strengthening the security sphere and combating the terrorist underground. We are convinced that Iraqi law enforcement agencies are capable of independently addressing these problems. It is important to achieve the timely implementation of the agreements reached on the phased withdrawal from Iraq of the so-called “international coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant”. Delaying that process and the presence of foreign troops in Iraq, in general, is not only a destabilizing factor for Iraq, but also negatively affects regional escalation, which is exceedingly fraught.

In that regard, we renew our firm support for Iraq’s sovereignty and oppose any interference in the Republic’s domestic affairs. Against the backdrop of escalating tensions throughout the Middle East, it is important to ward off attempts to draw Iraq into the conflicts raging in the region. Of particular concern in that regard is the intensification of Israeli air strikes, including those using Iraqi airspace. We are convinced that the Republic should not be turned into an arena for settling scores.

We highly appreciate Baghdad’s readiness to forge mutually beneficial relations with its neighbours in the spirit of friendship and cooperation. In that context,

the determination of the leadership of Iraq and Kuwait to quickly resolve all remaining issues in the spirit of good neighbourliness, including the repatriation of the remains of Kuwaiti citizens and the return of Kuwaiti national property, deserves special support.

We note the Organization’s multifaceted efforts in Iraq, including the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). In its 20 years of existence, UNAMI has fully realized its potential to restore and strengthen Iraqi State institutions, including through the normalization of sociopolitical relations and the organization of elections. The Iraqis are now ready to assume responsibility for the political future of their country, and our common goal is to help them do so. Resolution 2732 (2024) stipulates that the Mission will definitively complete its work by 31 December 2025 and that, by the end of this year, a joint plan for the drawdown and technical liquidation of the Mission should be agreed upon.

We hope to see this document soon and trust that the United Nations Secretariat will closely coordinate with the recently established Iraqi Government’s specialized committee on all issues related to the timely reduction of personnel and the orderly withdrawal of the Mission.

For our part, we will continue to provide Baghdad with comprehensive support and are committed to further strengthening friendly Russian-Iraqi relations.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Al Hassan for his briefing. I reiterate China’s support for his work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I also wish to thank Ms. Edwar for her briefing and welcome the presence of the representatives of Iraq and Kuwait in today’s meeting.

The situation in Iraq has been stable and improving over the past six months. The Government has taken concrete measures to improve people’s livelihoods, create jobs, combat corruption, promote economic reform and improve public services. China expresses its appreciation in that regard. That different factions in Iraq endeavour to strengthen unity, achieve reconciliation and grow together is in the fundamental interests of the Iraqi people. We support the Iraqi central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government in continuing to enhance dialogue and consultations on outstanding issues and in seeking sustainable solutions.

We welcome the election of a new speaker of the Iraqi Parliament and the successful holding of parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region. We note with concern that terrorist organizations remain active in Iraq, posing challenges to its security and stability. We call on the international community to continue to firmly support Iraq's efforts to strengthen its counter-terrorism and capacity-building and its actions to eliminate the remnants of terrorist forces and consolidate hard-won counter-terrorism gains.

Development in Iraq is not possible without a regional environment of peace, stability, good-neighbourliness and friendship. China is concerned about the potential impact of recent developments in Syria on Iraq, hoping that general calm will continue in Iraq. At the same time, we call on all parties concerned to respect Iraqi sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, to resolve their concerns through cooperation with the Iraqi Government and to avoid taking unilateral actions.

Since its inception, UNAMI has made important contributions to supporting the reconstruction and development of Iraq. The Council adopted resolution 2732 (2024) in May, setting a specific timetable for the formal termination of UNAMI's mandate. In accordance with the requirements of the resolution and on the basis of fully listening to the views of the Iraqi Government, China expects the Secretary-General to formulate a plan on the withdrawal of the Mission's personnel and the liquidation of its assets within the specified time frame. We hope that UNAMI will strengthen its communication with the Iraqi Government in order to ensure the gradual downsizing, smooth transition and eventual withdrawal of the Mission so as to bring its work of more than 20 years to a successful conclusion.

Finally, resolving the issue of missing Kuwaiti persons and property is of great significance to both Iraq and Kuwait. We hope that both sides will continue to make progress on the outstanding issues on the basis of the principles of mutual respect and friendly consultations. We also look forward to the Secretary-General's proposal to the Council on an appropriate follow-up mechanism.

Ms. Mendez Gruezo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Al Hassan and Ms. Edwar for their briefings. I welcome the presence of the representatives of Iraq and Kuwait.

The support efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) throughout its 21 years of operations in Iraq is today reflected in concrete actions, such as the adoption and ratification of the federal budget law, which enables the implementation of strategic projects for Iraq. It can also be seen in the holding of parliamentary elections in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, which endorses democratic institutionality and strengthens the rule of law. The same is true of the implementation of the expanded national census and the consolidation of a public policy with positive outcomes on the economic, social and anti-corruption fronts. The same can be said of the productive dialogue between the Federal Government, the Kurdistan Regional Government and other political sectors and efforts to secure the return of a significant number of internally displaced people.

Nonetheless, the delicate security situation in the region and the rising number of violent incidents perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other non-State armed groups threaten to undermine those gains and draw the country into the spiral of regional violence. Bilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms should be strengthened to counter security threats, bolster efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism and enhance diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions. The humanitarian and human rights situation also remains a cause for alarm and concern. The biannual report (S/2024/857) records killings, maimings, and abductions of civilians, including children, as a result of air strikes and the detonation of explosive remnants of war. Restrictions on the freedom of expression of journalists and civil society organizations also continue.

Today is the last time that Ecuador will participate in a meeting on the implementation of resolution 2732 (2024). In that connection, I commend UNAMI for its continued efforts and encourage it to continue working with the Iraqi Government, on a basis of national ownership, on the following points, which we consider to be priorities for consolidating the progress that has been achieved and overcoming the current challenges.

First, the plan for the transition and end of UNAMI operations must be taken forward in a timely, orderly and safe manner in accordance with the mandate in resolution 2732 (2024).

Secondly, laws that protect the rights of girls and promote a culture of respect for women and their

participation in every area of life, together with their equality before the law, must be safeguarded.

Thirdly, it will be important to coordinate with the country team, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies and international financial institutions. Strengthening cooperation and facilitating access to climate-related financing, given Iraq's considerable vulnerability to the adverse effects of that human-made issue, are necessary.

Fourthly, suitable mechanisms should be considered for further supporting the handling of the outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait, in particular the continuation of the work of the Tripartite Commission, which is tasked with determining the whereabouts of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, recovering Kuwaiti property and the national archives and the demarcation process, in cooperation with the Iraqi Government.

We look forward to seeing a definitive end to violence in the entire region and in Iraq and with it the consolidation of a prosperous, peaceful, secure and stable State.

Mr. Dharmadhikari (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Ms. Hanaa Edwar for their briefings. I also welcome the presence here today of the Ambassadors of Iraq and Kuwait.

First, France welcomes the Government of Iraq's efforts aimed at carrying out the reforms that the Iraqi people expect and calls for them to continue. We welcome the implementation of the Iraqi Prime Minister's reform agenda. The taking of a census of the population last month, the first since 1997, will help to better identify the population's needs. We encourage Iraq to pursue its reforms, in particular those aimed at diversifying the economy and fighting corruption and impunity. France reaffirms its commitment to the protection of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, and underscores the importance of advancing equality between men and women and of the protection of all communities in Iraq.

With regard to relations between Baghdad and Erbil, France calls for dialogue to continue, particularly on the sharing of oil revenues and security issues. The dialogue is in the interests of Iraq as a whole. We welcomed the organization and holding of legislative

elections in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan on 20 October. The poll represents an important political step for the Autonomous Region and for Iraq as a whole. The next step will be to form a regional Government.

France is deeply concerned about the repercussions of regional tensions for Iraq. The conflict in the Gaza Strip and recent developments in Syria have consequences for the entire region and for Iraq in particular. France will continue to strive to prevent a regional conflagration and is supporting the Iraqi Government's efforts to prevent the country from being drawn into the regional conflicts. The ceasefire agreement in Lebanon is a first step towards de-escalation.

France is committed to Iraq's security and stability and urges the country's neighbours to cease all interference in the country's internal affairs. Together with our partners, we will continue to stand by Iraq in its fight against terrorism, in full respect for Iraq's sovereignty. Iraq can count on our willingness to strengthen bilateral cooperation in that area for as long as it requests and for as long as the circumstances require.

The Council must support UNAMI during the transition phase. France pays tribute to UNAMI's pivotal role in providing assistance to Iraq in accordance with resolution 2732 (2024) and with full respect for Iraq's sovereignty.

We underscore the importance of close cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. We call for stepping up efforts to identify missing Kuwaitis and to return the national archives. We intend to examine the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/844) on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals.

Lastly, France encourages Iraq to continue cooperating with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI in order to ensure a gradual and orderly drawdown of the Mission at the end of December 2025, as required by resolution 2732 (2024).

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I would like to express my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, and to Ms. Hanaa Edwar for their informative briefings. I warmly welcome Mr. Al Hassan in his new role as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and trust that he will successfully navigate an orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal of UNAMI in close collaboration with the Iraqi Government.

We commend the Government and the people of Iraq, under the leadership of Prime Minister Al Sudani, for advancing peace, stability and development despite the various challenges, including the precarious situation in the region. In that regard, we also appreciate their steadfast commitment to dialogue, de-escalation and regional solidarity. Iraq has achieved significant milestones in its national development. In particular, we welcome the successful parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region on 20 October, which were managed effectively by the Independent High Electoral Commission with UNAMI's support. We also note with appreciation their efforts to promote greater participation among young people, minorities and women. We hope that will set the stage for the holding next year of general elections that are more transparent and inclusive, with a view to advancing Iraq's political stability, economic growth and social reforms. We also welcome the election of Mahmoud al-Mashhadani as Speaker of the Council of Representatives and look forward to his leadership in Iraq's legislative progress.

In Iraq's pursuit of its political and social development, promoting human rights and the rule of law remains vital. We urge a more effective implementation of the 2021 Yazidi survivors' law so as to ensure accountability for Da'esh's atrocities and secure reparations for survivors. In addition, we hope that the recent discussion on amendments to the personal status law, which relates to family and personal life in Iraq, will put the interests of women and children at their centre and will thereby strengthen the protection of women and children's rights. Moreover, protecting civic space is essential in empowering civil society to uphold democratic values and human rights.

We also remain deeply concerned about the provocations by non-State militant groups in Iraq, which risk destabilizing both Iraq and the broader region. Any attempts to exploit the current regional uncertainties are unacceptable. In that regard, we fully support the Iraqi Government, the United Nations and stakeholders in efforts to de-escalate the fragile situation.

Furthermore, we note the continued efforts of the Tripartite Commission to address the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-party nationals. We encourage Iraq to maintain further active engagement with Kuwait to achieve further progress based on mutual respect. We also hope that there will be additional developments regarding the missing Kuwaiti property issues.

As a long-standing partner of Iraq, and having contributed more than 3,000 troops for peacekeeping and reconstruction in that country from 2004 to 2008, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to supporting the Iraqi people's pursuit of stability, prosperity and security. The Republic of Korea will also continue to work in close consultation with UNAMI and the Secretary-General and to support their critical efforts to ensure a successful transition.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I too thank Special Representative Al Hassan for his informative briefing and Ms. Edwar for the insights shared with us today.

Malta commends the ongoing work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in its support of peace, stability and development in Iraq, particularly at this time of turmoil, violence and instability in the region. As the Mission prepares for its transition, we welcome the establishment of a Government committee to facilitate that process and emphasize the importance of an orderly and safe transfer of responsibilities. We also highlight the need for comprehensive gender analysis and technical gender expertise throughout the transition process. This would ensure that women's needs and participation are fully integrated.

As Iraq continues on its democratic journey, we welcomed the progress made on the Kurdistan region's recent parliamentary elections. We commend the efforts of the Independent High Electoral Commission, regional authorities and UNAMI towards ensuring an orderly, peaceful and transparent electoral process. Civil society and the media are also vital to a healthy democracy. Their space and freedoms must be safeguarded so they can contribute to Iraq's development. Malta underscores the importance of promoting justice and equality, the promotion and protection of human rights and women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all processes.

We strongly urge Iraq to adopt legislation against all forms of domestic violence, including but not limited to physical, psychological, emotional and economic violence. Any amendments to the personal status law must align with international human rights obligations. We are deeply concerned about the proposed amendments to the personal status law that would legalize child marriage and remove critical protections for divorced women. We call on Iraq to uphold its commitments under the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Malta recognizes the Government of Iraq's efforts to implement durable solutions for internally displaced persons. The establishment of a national high committee on displacement is a positive step, and we encourage its continued collaboration with the United Nations to ensure safe, voluntary and dignified returns for internally displaced persons. We urge the international community to remain committed to supporting the humanitarian and development priorities of Iraq and its people.

The impact of climate change and water scarcity in Iraq remains a pressing concern. As it is the fifth-most affected country globally by climate change, urgent action is needed. We echo the Secretary-General's call for regional and international cooperation to develop sustainable solutions to those challenges, and we welcome the Government's initiatives to address those issues and its collaboration with the United Nations.

Finally, we welcome UNAMI's continued support to the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, as well as missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Further progress to resolve that long-standing issue, guided by the principles of mutual respect, sovereignty and good-neighbourly relations, must remain a priority. We express our gratitude to the United Nations staff in Iraq for their dedication, particularly during this pivotal phase of transition. We reaffirm our commitment to supporting Iraq's sovereignty, stability and long-term development.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, for his first briefing to the Security Council. We wish him every success in fulfilling his mandate during what is an important time of transition for Iraq and the United Nations. We also thank Hanaa Edwar for her remarks and welcome the presence in today's meeting of the representatives of Iraq and Kuwait.

Since this is my delegation's last statement on UNAMI and Iraq for this term, we would like to begin by highlighting the many positive developments that we have witnessed in the country during our term. We welcome the Government's efforts to provide public services to its citizens, tackle unemployment, poverty and corruption, and to implement economic reforms. It

is important for those efforts to continue and for Iraq to continue on its path towards consolidating a democratic and prosperous future for all its people.

As our term on the Council draws to a close, we look forward to seeing a continuation of the progress we have supported as a member of the Council. Over the coming months, it will be crucial to ensure that the reconfiguration of the United Nations presence, including the drawdown of UNAMI, is a shared success story. In the Pact for the Future, we all reaffirmed the importance of framing and guiding peace operations through political strategies. That includes viable transition plans. We are encouraged by the details regarding the coordination of the transition between the United Nations and the Government. Our engagement in that regard has been guided by the following points, which are still relevant to us today.

First, institutions of legitimacy are a fundamental element of any system of governance and ensuring the stability of a given country, whether at local, national or regional levels. In that regard, Switzerland welcomes the holding of elections in Iraq's region of Kurdistan in October. We welcome the technical assistance provided by UNAMI in the organization of the elections, as well as the efforts made by the Independent High Electoral Commission to promote the candidacies of women. Those elections can also contribute to establishing a regular and structured dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil on all outstanding issues.

Secondly, on the security and regional front, it is essential for Iraq to continue to foster an atmosphere of dialogue and cooperation in the region, as it has done in recent years. We have on several occasions welcomed the Government of Iraq's willingness to promote a regional approach to tackling the adverse effects of climate change and water scarcity. In addition, it remains essential for Iraq to fully control the use of force throughout its territory. We also reiterate that Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected by all.

Thirdly, in every country in the world, and as has been the long-standing practice in my own country, guaranteeing human rights and providing inclusive spaces for dialogue in which minority voices are heard is an important investment in prevention. We therefore welcome the Government of Iraq's efforts to find lasting solutions for the internally displaced persons in the country. Special attention must be devoted to addressing the needs and rights of vulnerable groups,

especially children. We also remind the Iraqi authorities that it is crucial to ensure that any amendments to Iraq's personal status law must comply with the country's international human rights obligations.

Finally, progress must be made in the search for missing Kuwaiti and Iraqi citizens, third-country nationals and missing stateless persons, including with a view to ensuring the conclusion of UNAMI's mandate.

I would like to conclude my remarks by wishing Iraq and its people all the best for the future. We have strived to accompany Iraq on this path through our work on the UNAMI dossier. Having recently reopened our Embassy in Baghdad, Switzerland also looks forward to strengthening its bilateral relations with Iraq in the coming years.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I welcome Special Representative Al Hassan to his first briefing to the Security Council in his role as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and thank him for his briefing. I also thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar, President of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, for her contribution. I also welcome the representatives of Iraq and Kuwait to the meeting.

We join the Special Representative in acknowledging the efforts of the Government of Iraq in its pursuit of peace, development and stability in the country. In recent years, Iraq has made significant progress to that end, with an important contribution from UNAMI.

I would like to make three points.

First, we commend the positive role Iraq plays in the region. We note its diplomatic efforts to advance stability, including through engagement and balanced dialogue with regional and international partners, as well as by calling for de-escalation across the region. We support Iraq in continuing to play that role. We call on all to respect and support Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic political process. Iraq should not be used by regional players as a space to settle scores. It is of utmost importance that Iraq does not get dragged into the current wider regional escalation, which would reverse the hard-earned progress in the country. In that context, we call for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon and encourage the implementation of Security Council resolutions on Gaza and hostages. Slovenia also reiterates the importance of continued cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the file on missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, as well as missing property. We echo

the call of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq to intensify efforts in that regard. The United Nations should remain closely engaged on this subject.

Secondly, to preserve achievements and establish Iraq as a place for dialogue, cooperation and resilience to the challenges of a very volatile region, we encourage the Government of Iraq to maintain its commitment to reforms that include protecting human rights, building resilient, democratic and accountable institutions and fighting corruption. In particular, we call on the Government of Iraq to protect and promote the rights of women and girls, consistent with Iraq's international human rights obligations. We are deeply concerned about proposed legislative changes that, if enacted, would risk seriously eroding the human rights of women and girls. We also encourage Iraq to protect civic and democratic space and allow civic actors to freely engage in efforts to promote democratic values and the protection of human rights. In addition, the perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses must be held accountable for all their actions. It goes without saying that the atrocities committed by Da'esh should not go unpunished.

Equally important is the creation of political, social and economic opportunities for all, addressing the root causes of violent extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as dealing with the situation of displaced and missing persons. Those efforts could help to strengthen the fabric of society, rebuild trust and help to create a peaceful and safe environment for all. That is important for the Iraqi people and a prosperous and democratic future for Iraq, as well as for regional stability.

Thirdly, the effects of climate change have become major risk multipliers for Iraq's stability and must be addressed. What we refer to are climate-change-related droughts and water scarcity, with serious consequences for agriculture and food security. We recognize the Government of Iraq's efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change and its willingness to work with its neighbours on the joint management of transboundary water resources. We welcome UNAMI's support to that end.

In conclusion, we welcome the Government's willingness to facilitate the transition of UNAMI, in line with resolution 2732 (2024). We reiterate our support to Iraq as it continues its journey towards a stable and prosperous future.

Mr. Mikanagi (Japan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mohamed Al Hassan, for his briefing. On this occasion, I would also like to welcome his arrival in Iraq, serving as the new Special Representative since October. I hope that he will successfully steer UNAMI in the right direction through this difficult transition period over the next year. I also thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar, President of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, for her briefing.

We took note of the two recent reports of the Secretary-General, covering recent updates on UNAMI activities (S/2024/857) and developments pertaining to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives (S/2024/844).

UNAMI has contributed significantly to the stability of Iraq and the region. Although UNAMI entered a transition period, it has maintained its role. According to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), the election in the Kurdistan region in October was conducted through an orderly and peaceful voting process with no major incidents, which was welcomed by both the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq and the President of Iraq. That is largely due to the support provided by UNAMI for the electoral system. Japan hopes that such order will be maintained in the future.

In addition, Japan commends the serious efforts by the Iraqi Government in combating terrorism in a diligent and effective manner. We are glad to hear that it has succeeded, with the support of the international community, in eliminating a number of terrorists, including the leaders of Da'esh-related groups in the region.

Japan understands the challenging situation confronted by approximately 1 million internally displaced persons in Iraq. As a result of government efforts and the coordinated support of the United Nations, including UNAMI, 4.9 million internally displaced persons have returned thus far, and we hope that the Iraqi authorities will continue that progress, based on the new road map submitted in August.

Japan strongly hopes to see further positive steps being taken on the issue of missing persons between Iraq and Kuwait. We recognize that the task of searching for those who went missing or died during the war is not an

easy one and will require a great deal of time and effort, including obtaining aerial photographs of wide areas and conducting detailed DNA testing. However, still nearly half of the missing persons are yet to be found, and Japan expects the Iraqi authorities to make every effort to resolve that issue and, in particular, to make an active and stable contribution to the Technical Subcommittee. In addition, it is encouraged to actively discuss options for a mechanism that provides continuous reporting, authorized by the Security Council, before the UNAMI mandate expires.

Both Iraq and Kuwait have overcome the turmoil of the past and are now working together hand in hand. Resolving the remaining problem is important for reconciliation and lasting peace. Japan hopes that the tireless efforts of both countries, in cooperation with the international community, will bring an end to this problem as soon as possible.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States of America.

First, let me thank Special Representative Al Hassan for his briefing, the first he has delivered to the Security Council as the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. We also greatly appreciate Ms. Hanaa Edwar's briefing on women's rights in Iraq and applaud her efforts in drafting an anti-domestic violence law, which we hope will be adopted.

The arrival of Special Representative Al Hassan in Iraq coincided with the lead-up to the election for the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament on 20 October, an important milestone in Iraq's continued progress towards stability.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) played an important role in helping the Iraqi authorities to organize the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament election and coordinate reporting with election-monitoring non-governmental organizations. We were pleased that the election proceeded smoothly with high voter participation.

The United States encourages UNAMI's further advice, support and technical assistance to Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission in support of Iraqi parliamentary elections in the third quarter of 2025. Throughout its 21-year existence, UNAMI has provided invaluable assistance to address social and economic challenges with respect to promoting and safeguarding human rights, combating climate change

and supporting women's rights and governance reform, to name a few.

UNAMI has important work to do before it concludes its mission at the end of 2025, especially in the light of the Secretary-General's most recent report on missing Kuwaitis and missing Kuwaiti property (S/2024/844). While the report cited some progress, we know that more needs to be done. The United States urges the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to redouble their efforts in support of the Tripartite Commission, and for Special Representative Al Hassan and his team in UNAMI to do all they can to assist. Given the importance of Iraq-Kuwait relations for regional stability, we look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations for a follow-on mechanism, as appropriate, to support progress on that file pursuant to resolution 2732 (2024), which was adopted unanimously in May.

The end of UNAMI's mandate should not spell the end of work on Kuwaiti missing persons and property. We recognize that high-level engagement is sometimes required to spur progress, and we will continue to support the use of those levers strategically. UNAMI can and should use its good offices to that end. For its part, the United States has provided new satellite images for the identification of four potential burial sites in Iraq. We encourage efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Iraq to conduct joint analyses and site investigations as soon as possible. We will also continue our own research on four sites in Kuwait by trying to locate witnesses among United States veterans' associations. The United States understands the importance of identifying missing persons and repatriating their remains, based on its own experience from the war in Viet Nam and, more recently, at the World Trade Center here in New York City.

As the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait pursue the resolution of all outstanding issues, we must also keep an international spotlight on efforts to ensure justice and accountability for victims of crimes against humanity committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh, including genocide against the Yazidis and gender-based violence in Iraq. We commend the work by the Government of Iraq to establish a national centre for international judicial cooperation for that purpose. We also welcome Iraq's desire to share evidence with third countries bilaterally, on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that members of ISIL/Da'esh are held accountable for their crimes in Iraq. We

further encourage the Government of Iraq to support an enhanced United Nations archive to preserve evidence collected by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to help to ensure investigations and prosecutions by third countries.

The United States remains committed to working with the Government of Iraq to strengthen and deepen our long-term whole-of-government partnership in pursuit of a secure, stable and sovereign Iraq.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Marzooq (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate the delegation of the United States of America on assuming the Security Council presidency for this month. I also thank Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for his briefing on the reports of the Secretary-General (S/2024/844 and S/2024/857).

In recent months, we have witnessed internal political stability in Iraq, exemplified by the election of a new Speaker of the House of Representatives and the holding of parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The Iraqi Government undertook important roles at the domestic and regional levels. It focused on improving the economic situation by promoting domestic and foreign investment, reducing dependency on oil and implementing anti-corruption reforms in government institutions. The Government worked on enhancing internal security and intelligence efforts to ensure stability. It also implemented social reforms to promote public services and create job opportunities. The Government improved relations with neighbouring countries through diplomatic dialogue and security cooperation. It continued coordination with the global coalition and regional countries against financing Da'esh and prevented the return of extremist groups. The Government is also working as a mediator on certain sensitive regional issues to promote stability in the region.

Moreover, Iraq has recently witnessed huge success in conducting its first national census in 37 years. All areas of Iraq were included, as well as the Kurdistan region of Iraq. That reflects the efforts undertaken to promote development planning and achieve sustainable development. UNAMI and the United Nations

Population Fund have played a critical role to that end. They provided technical assistance and promoted national capacities. The census is an important step towards understanding the needs of the population and distributing resources in a fairer manner. It also provides a comprehensive database to support national policies and decision-makers in the fields of education, health, population and development.

I would like to present a summary of the most important developments that have taken place in Iraq over the past four months.

The relationship between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government has greatly improved, demonstrating the clear readiness by both parties to find solutions through direct negotiations without a mediator. Progress and convergence have also been made in addressing outstanding issues, in particular budget allocation, oil revenue-sharing and regional security. Officials from the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government continued to meet and hold consultations at the highest levels to reach a formula to resume oil exports from the region, which have been halted since March 2023, and invest in oil revenues in a mutually beneficial way to ensure the stability of the Iraqi budget in general. The dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil also included discussions on the broader political and economic context, including the decentralization of payments and the regular transfer of budget funds to Kurdistan, as well as certain controversial issues regarding the Kirkuk dossier through dialogue to prevent any further escalation of tensions.

Iraq has also made notable progress in the area of security and counter-terrorism. The Iraqi security forces implemented substantive operations against Da'esh cells. Intelligence cooperation among various domestic and international security entities allowed certain terrorist schemes to be uncovered before they were carried out, and border control was promoted to prevent the infiltration of terrorists and smuggling of arms. Those efforts have led to further stability in many cities and governorates.

Iraq has also made great strides in our security efforts. The United States military units now play a consultative and support role, focusing on capacity-building within Iraqi security units and supporting them. That transformation is part of a wider strategy to promote local control and ensure stability in the long

term. That will also assist in curbing the need for any foreign intervention.

The Iraq-United States Higher Military Commission continues to cooperate and focus on the adaptation of common strategies and improving intelligence and information-sharing, as well as joint exercises to ensure that the gains achieved against the Da'esh organization are maintained. The joint efforts of global alliances, as well as enhanced local capacities and strategic dialogue, represent a great achievement and progress in the security landscape in Iraq. Such progress reflects Iraq's greater capacity for self-governance and ability to address threats.

The Government of Iraq stresses its position against the use of Iraq's territories or airspace to launch military aggression against any country. That position underscores Iraq's commitment to maintaining its sovereignty and neutrality amid the current tensions and regional conflicts in the Middle East. Any use of Iraqi airspace or air bases to launch attacks against any country could have strong regional reactions, which could lead to wider instability in Iraq and jeopardize its current efforts towards reconstruction and political stability. Iraq refuses to have its territory or airspace used to launch any act of aggression, as mentioned in the identical letters dated 29 October 2024 (S/2024/816), concerning the Israeli entity's violation of Iraq's airspace to launch attacks against the neighbouring Islamic Republic of Iran. Iraq's position is based on our permanent Constitution. It is also a reflection of our commitment to the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibit the use or threat of force against the territorial integrity of any country. The Government of Iraq has continuously called for dialogue and diplomacy to resolve conflicts. We have stressed in multiple international forums our commitment to a peaceful foreign policy. We also play the role of mediator and provide a forum for dialogue by hosting talks and mediation efforts among various parties in the region. Through such efforts, the Government of Iraq seeks to protect our national interests while contributing to regional and international peace, to prevent the entire region from falling into pointless bloody conflicts.

The Government of Iraq has launched numerous projects that focus on enhancing the country's main sectors, including education, housing, social protection, electricity and infrastructure. We have made progress in implementing development programmes and enhancing

public services and comprehensive socioeconomic growth. We have worked closely with international partners, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, to secure investment and technical support to foster our economic diversity and create job opportunities. In addition, the Government projects that focus on services have increased the number of green areas and environmental sustainability, while promoting urbanization.

The Government has made concrete progress in countering desertification and implementing sustainable policies on water and irrigation to counter the harsh environmental challenges facing Iraq, while making further national efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change, water scarcity and soil erosion. On the issue of water management, the Government is also implementing new irrigation policies to ensure the effective use of water, given the repercussions of low river levels and the overuse of underground sources of water. The policies represent a transformative progress aimed at an integrated management of water resources. The Government is also committed to addressing the root causes of climate issues, including the loss of vegetation cover and the mismanagement of water. We work with civil society to provide sustainable support and adopt innovative practices for the management of water and land.

Relations between Iraq and the sisterly State of Kuwait have seen significant progress, which reflects the joint commitment to promoting diplomatic and economic relations between the two brotherly countries. Both parties are continuously in consultation to address common issues through diplomatic channels. Accordingly, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani and Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah met on the sidelines of the General Assembly meetings in September and expressed their strong desire to promote bilateral cooperation and revitalize the joint technical committees to address mutual interests, such as security, economic cooperation and infrastructure projects. That is an important step forward, as both parties stand ready to cooperate constructively, especially with regard to sensitive issues of mutual interest.

The general trend in the relations between Iraq and Kuwait has been positive, driven by common interests in reaching sound solutions. Just like Kuwait, Iraq is committed to countering challenges that obstruct

reaching a solution on issues between the two countries, especially when it comes to identifying human remains, which embodies a noble and critical objective. Iraqi officials have worked on addressing that issue and have facilitated the efforts made through joint initiatives such as analysing satellite images and working with missions on the ground to collect evidence, identify potential burial sites in Iraq and provide any information that will enable progress. Recently, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iraq has been in contact with its Kuwaiti counterpart to decide on a time in the near future to hand over samples of remains to the Kuwaiti side that were found in Muthanna governorate, at the Shaykhia graveyard. They were found by the technical team assigned to search and find persons who went missing during the second Gulf War.

Resolution 2732 (2024) is considered a victory for Iraq, the United Nations and the international community. It paves the way for greater cooperation with the United Nations, based on consultation and respect for the will and sovereignty of States. Over the past period, UNAMI focused on finishing economic reform, providing services and addressing sustainable development, climate change and other development issues. The gradual transfer of the Mission's duties to Iraqi national institutions and United Nations agencies is indicative of the trust placed in Iraq's ability to manage its own affairs without having to rely on international support. The Government of Iraq expresses its readiness to fully cooperate with the Mission through its transitional liquidation phase by providing all necessary support and security protection until we reach the responsible drawdown by the end of 2025.

In conclusion, we would like to thank His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary-General, for the steadfast position of the United Nations in supporting Iraq and respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We would also like to express our appreciation for the work of UNAMI and other United Nations bodies and international organizations in Iraq.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and for your role and broad engagement in addressing the concerns of the international community while following up on matters related to safeguarding international peace

and security. I would also like to commend the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom and her delegation on their work during their presidency of the Security Council last month. I also welcome my brother, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We are confident in his dedication and wisdom to address this file, which is important for the region and the entire world. I also thank Ms. Edwar for her briefing.

I decided to participate in the Council's meeting on this subject for a third consecutive time, to stress the need to safeguard what must be safeguarded, in particular with respect to humanitarian issues. Human beings and their concerns are the basic pillar and the compass of our actual activity and engagement within the United Nations. They — and not political changes and complications nor their violent repercussions at times — form the basis of our legitimacy and activity at the United Nations.

The forty-first report of the Secretary-General pertaining to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives (S/2024/844), contains a painful human story that goes back to the 1990s. It is a story about the bitter experience of families and the separation of 602 missing persons, parents and children. That story is not over. The efforts to find and identify the remains of the remaining 308 persons continue. There are also efforts to continue pushing the Council to follow up on this purely humanitarian file, which is important and has a direct impact.

The United Nations also continues its close follow-up in the field with all concerned parties, including both Kuwait and Iraq. That is important, as is transparency and the reflection of the realities in the periodic reports of the Secretary-General. All of that is part of our joint efforts. We must clarify all matters as opposed to just some. We must expose any delays or procrastination that would obstruct progress on this file. The extent of the delays on the ground is well known to everyone, in particular UNAMI and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the Member States in the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Subcommittee, namely the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Iraq and my own country, Kuwait.

The records of the recent meetings of the two aforementioned committees clearly reflect that delay, as well as the reluctance by some to push forward in the search and identification of remains. The reasons can be attributed to several factors. While some are related to motivation, others may be political in nature. We would not wish to politicize humans and their needs or family cohesion. We owe it to them to work diligently and faithfully. We must accelerate the search process to help to alleviate their suffering, bringing them closer to the long-awaited truth. Ending that suffering requires genuine desire to finish the file through translating words into tangible actions rather than procrastinating and delaying.

In May, the Council adopted resolution 2732 (2024), which reiterates the end of UNAMI's mission and tasks as directly requested by the Iraqi Prime Minister. That is a sovereign decision that we all respect and uphold. However, what primarily concerns the State of Kuwait, as per paragraph 6 (b) of the resolution, is the need to establish a United Nations mechanism that effectively pushes this process forward until we identify the remains of the last missing person and regain all missing Kuwaiti properties, including the national archives. In that regard, we reiterate our conviction that the United Nations should appoint a high-level coordinator to focus on the file of prisoners, missing persons and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, separately. That mechanism has achieved a lot since the adoption of resolution 1284 (1999). The two high-level coordinators contributed to the identification of the remains of 234 missing people and oversaw the restoration of much of the property that was seized during the occupation. By way of comparison, that constitutes major progress, and we look forward to similar United Nations activities in the upcoming period.

Today's meeting is convened under the agenda item entitled "The situation concerning Iraq". Resolution 2732 (2024) points to the "resolution of outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait". The recent report of the Secretary-General related to the overall activity of UNAMI (S/2024/857), in particular paragraphs 13 and 14, speaks about the Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations. However, I should point out that the current setback in the path of bilateral relations is not limited to the issue of prisoners and missing persons. It includes several of the bilateral files between the two countries. For example, the Republic of Iraq made the following decisions in 2023 that contributed to the setback, and, as a result,

agreements that had been enforced for years were cancelled. Those decisions have also undermined the bilateral progress achieved during recent years.

First, there was the annulment of the activities undertaken pursuant to the protocol of reciprocal security concluded in 2008, which had a particular impact, as it includes provisions related to the amendment mechanism.

Secondly, Iraq did not respond to the request by the State of Kuwait to convene the joint technical teams that are related to the agreement on regulating maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah, concluded in 2012. That undermines the noble goals that the agreement sought to achieve.

Thirdly, the meetings of the technical and legal committees on concluding the demarcation of maritime borders beyond mark 162, were suspended, despite an agreement to continue convening those meetings since 2021.

In the same context, the State of Kuwait has been reiterating since September 2023, and continues to reiterate, its commitment to the provisions of the agreement to regulate maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah and the security reciprocity protocol, based on its commitment to bringing bilateral relations with Iraq back to the right track and its keen interest in safeguarding the safety and security of the water pathways in vital areas that host a number of important strategic projects. That commitment was also based on the need to secure and defend those areas should the relevant agreements related to them be cancelled, whether demarcated or not. As such, we call on our brothers in the Republic of Iraq to rectify the legal status of the agreement to regulate maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah, to resume the meetings of the technical teams and to work in line with the 2008 security reciprocity protocol. We also call for the resumption of the meetings of the joint legal and technical teams to continue the demarcation of maritime borders beyond mark 162, in line with international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It is important to point out in that regard that the requests of the State of Kuwait to start negotiations

on resuming the demarcation of the maritime borders beyond mark 162, in accordance with Security Council resolution 833 (1993), go back to the year 2005. The recent report shows that there is a need to convene the meetings of the joint technical and legal committees, particularly those related to completing the demarcation of the maritime borders beyond maritime mark No. 162 and to regulating maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah.

Bilateral relations among countries and achieving progress are not contingent upon one file over another. We therefore reiterate our call on brotherly Iraq to strengthen consultations on all outstanding issues. Regarding those outstanding issues, I refer to the statement delivered few days ago by His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, during the forty-fifth Summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council. He stated that those files are relatively easy to resolve to the benefit of the bilateral Kuwait-Iraqi relations and to expand their prospects by activating the existing mechanisms that specifically follow up on those files.

I once again thank you and your Permanent Mission, Madam President, for your cooperation and for convening this meeting. I also thank brother Mohamed Al Hassan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, for his role in pushing forward towards enhancing current cooperation prospects and reflecting the visions and aspirations of our two fraternal countries in the interests of our bilateral relations.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the representatives of Mozambique, Switzerland, Ecuador, Japan and Malta, given that this might be my last briefing in the course of their membership of the Security Council. I thank them for all their dedication and faithful follow-up with a view to fulfilling the primary task of the Council, namely, maintaining international peace and security.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.