



**Speech of Deputy Special Representative  
of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq  
Jerzy Skuratowicz  
On Closing of Consultation Conference on National Action Plan for  
Human Rights**

*Baghdad, 7 June 2011*

Minister Al Sudani, Excellencies, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This national consultation conference, called to discuss the Governments draft national action plan on human rights implementing the recommendations made during the Universal Periodic Review of Iraq in February 2010, has indeed been a first for Iraq. It is the first time that representatives from various sectors of Iraqi society have come together to discuss the formulation of Government policy in relation to promoting and protecting human rights. The discussions have been fruitful; many tough issues have been raised and considered; and recommendations have been made for addressing the challenges facing Iraq and to ensure that the basic rights of all Iraq's people are better protected and respected in the future.

Of course, it is not possible for everyone to participate in such a conference – and it is not possible to resolve all the issues that Iraq faces in three days. But it is a start. It is hoped that the dialogue between the Government of Iraq and the people of Iraq, evidenced during the discussions that have taken place here, will continue - that a true partnership between the government and civil society will emerge that contributes to creating an environment wherein the respect for the human rights of all Iraq's people, without distinction or discrimination, will be assured.

I wish to reiterate the words of the SRSG, Mr Ad Melkert made at the beginning of this conference. It is the obligation of Governments to ensure that the rights of all citizens, without discrimination, are respected and protected. The events in North Africa and the Middle East have shown that the more governments disregard elementary rights, the more determined the response of the people becomes to repression of their freedoms. Iraq has suffered much in the past. Previous regimes, war, invasion, occupation and conflict have inflicted on millions of Iraqis, in one form or another, the loss of their basic human rights – and accountability for past crimes and violations of human rights still needs to be addressed. While there have been some improvements in the human rights situation in Iraq, many daunting challenges remain.

Iraq has chosen democracy as the proper means for ensuring a prosperous future for its people. Human Rights are fundamental to the effective functioning of democracy. It is therefore imperative that the Government responds to the legitimate demands of the people, to ensure that their human rights, including and in particular, the respect for genuine freedom of expression, are protected and respected without discrimination, Iraqi citizens need to be assured that they are all equally and vigorously protected against all forms of threat, intimidation, harassment and violence in exercising their rights. Accountability is at the core of any effective protection of Human Rights. Reports of violations of Human Rights, including by law enforcement, need to be seriously investigated and those found responsible for acts of threats or intimidation aimed at limiting the lawful exercise of people's rights must be held accountable according to the law.

Iraq is a signatory to a number of key human rights treaties and conventions – including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Iraq has signed but not yet ratified the Convention against Torture, nor has it signed other key human rights treaties, such as the Refugees Convention and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is hoped that signing and ratification of such conventions will be among the recommendations proposed by this conference.

It is these key human rights conventions that serve as the bedrock of Iraq's international obligations and on which the United Nations bases its interactions with the Government of Iraq and Iraqi civil society. The United Nations, and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq, are here to assist the Government of Iraq and its people comply with these obligations through direct advocacy, awareness raising, training and capacity building, monitoring and reporting.

It is Iraq's compliance with these international obligations that were reviewed by the United Nations Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review in February 2010. The National Action Plan on Human Rights is the road map which states publicly the Government's will to implement the 135 recommendations accepted during that review. It is these same obligations that Iraq will be reviewed on again in 2014.

Now that this conference is concluded, the real work begins – it is the Government's duty to ensure that the recommendations made will be properly incorporated into the National Action Plan in its final form. This will mean a plan with a defined time-line for implementation and that adequate resources are allocated to it. But it will be up to Government and people of Iraq, working together, to ensure that the National Action Plan is implemented in reality.

The United Nations stands ready to assist the government and people of Iraq in this endeavour.

**END**