

UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission



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SG Ban Ki-moon visits Baghdad

During his visit to Baghdad, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and other Senior Iraqi leaders. Mr. Ki-moon described his meetings as important and fruitful. He discussed with Mr. Al Maliki the latest developments in Iraq and explored with him the different ways the United Nations can become more effective in conducting its duties and obligations in Iraq.

The United Nations Secretary-General said that his visit to Baghdad as the first stop of his regional tour emphasizes Iraq's place on the United Nations list of priorities. He noted that although the United Nations has been extensively engaged with Iraq on a variety of critical issues for many years, today's visit reaffirms the position of the UN, Iraq and the International Community on the need for more active engagement for the UN in Iraq.

During his meetings with Mr. Al-Maliki and other Senior Iraqi leaders SG Ban Ki-moon stressed the need for an all-inclusive political and reconciliation process to bring down the level of violence, sectarian tensions and improve security and the human rights situation in Iraq.

He also noted that the United Nations is co-chairing the International compact for Iraq (ICI) with the Government of Iraq. He said, "I co-chaired with Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi the ICI meeting, which was held Friday on 16 March at New York Headquarters." He added that the United Nations was encouraged that more than 30 different delegations representing the Member States and international institutions expressed unreserved support for the Compact, and noted the meeting set the end of April as a possible time to launch the ICI.

SG Ban Ki-Moon assured the Iraqi people that the United Nations' commitment to Iraq and the people of Iraq is unwavering and long term.



SG Ban Ki-moon and SRSR Ashraf Qazi,
Baghdad on 22 Marc 2007

He earlier visited the headquarters of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) where he spoke with UN staff members, both international and national. He also laid a wreath at the monument for UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello who, along with 21 others, was killed in the terrorist bombing of UN headquarters in Iraq on 19 August 2003.

The one-day trip to Baghdad is the first to Iraq by a UN Secretary-General since Mr. Ban's predecessor Kofi Annan visited the strife-torn capital in November 2005.

SG Ban Ki-Moon opening remarks to meeting on the International Compact with Iraq (ICI)

Some 100 delegations from Member States, humanitarian agencies and regional organizations gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 16 March 2007 to attend a meeting on the International Compact with Iraq (ICI). The Compact which is co-chaired by the Iraqi Government and United Nations is a long-term initiative for Iraq that aims to consolidate peace and pursue political, economic and social development over the next five years.

Following is the opening remarks by SG Ban Ki-moon before the meeting :

I thank you all for attending this meeting and for your commitment to the International Compact with Iraq.

The preparatory process for the Compact has been under way in Baghdad since July 2006. This process, which included two high-level meetings in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, has brought together the Government of Iraq and the international community in an effort to develop a mechanism that would help Iraq to realize its national vision.

As you know, a small support group was established to support the preparatory process. But it has always been our intention – and that of the Government of Iraq – to expand the group in due course. Today's meeting offers an opportunity to bring the larger international community together to consider how best to support the people of Iraq under the Compact.

I am pleased that His Excellency, Mr. Adel Abdul Mahdi, Vice- President of Iraq, is here today to inform us about the latest developments in Iraq and, in particular, about the progress that has been made in the preparatory process for the Compact.

INDEX:

- SG visit to Baghdad	1
-SG speech-ICI	1
-SRSR statement-SC	2
-SRSR Activities	3
-Political Update	3
- Constitutional Support Newsflash	3
- Human Rights News	4
- Electoral Update	4
- Relief, Reconstruction & Development Activities	4
- Brief from PIO	4
- photos-SG visit	5

We are all aware of the difficult situation in Iraq. It is heart-wrenching to see almost daily attacks on innocent civilians, which have left immense suffering and pain in their wake. Beyond the political violence and sectarian strife, a humanitarian crisis is stretching the patience and ability of ordinary people to cope with everyday life. The United Nations is now strengthening its humanitarian efforts, and working with Iraq's neighbours and other countries in the region, to address the increasing needs of those who have left Iraq temporarily, those displaced inside the country and those suffering from diminishing access to basic public services.

Given these circumstances, some may question why a Compact would be necessary or appropriate. I understand these concerns. However, a framework for normalization is required now more than ever.

I am also aware of the view that there is a multitude of initiatives on Iraq which have yet to yield tangible results. Certainly, there is a need to streamline and consolidate these initiatives, and to concentrate on achievable goals. But unlike the other initiatives, the Compact focuses on Iraq's long-term economic development, while also stressing progress in the political and security fields, through a mutually re-enforcing relationship.

The Compact aims to achieve its objectives in two ways: First, a "national compact" among Iraqis on the necessary security and political steps would be agreed upon. These steps are prerequisites for the normalization of the situation in Iraq and for the revitalization of the economy. Second, an "international compact" between Iraq and its partners would set out the Government of Iraq's agenda for the next five years with regard to economic and social reform. This shared vision and mutual commitment would allow the international community to channel support in accordance with the priorities decided upon by Iraqis themselves.

The Compact should be seen as a tool for unlocking Iraq's own potential. It seeks to achieve concrete results in the areas of public sector resource management, institution building and human development, in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. It also emphasizes a more holistic approach to energy management. Toward that end, the Government's recent efforts to adopt new oil and gas legislation are encouraging. Indeed, a viable arrangement to share the nation's oil wealth and natural resources can also help build much-needed trust and confidence among Iraqi communities.

There has also been welcome progress in adopting other key legislative acts. But these may not achieve their full and positive impact unless the same consensus is also expressed

in the Iraqi Constitution. This makes a genuine and meaningful constitutional review process all the more important.

Above all, it is essential that all Iraqi communities come together in a spirit of dialogue to find lasting solutions. As they do so, they should be able to count on the active support of Iraq's neighbours and the international community. The Compact is an important framework for fulfilling precisely those shared responsibilities towards Iraq and its people.

The United Nations is committed to supporting the implementation of the Compact. Through my good offices, and those of my Special Representative in Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the United Nations will make every effort to ensure that the international community remains engaged in this process.

I have appointed Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, who is well known to you all, as my Special Advisor on the International Compact with Iraq and Other Political Issues, to succeed Mr. Mark Malloch Brown as Co-Chair of the Compact. He will be in active contact with all concerned to move this process forward and to ensure its success.

The challenges ahead are immense. I am sure you will all agree that we cannot leave Iraq on its own to cope with them. The International Compact is intended to help the Government to build a secure, unified, federal and democratic nation, founded on the principles of freedom and equality, capable of providing peace and prosperity for all its people.

A positive political progress and a reduction of violence are essential preconditions for the success of this initiative. I call on the parties to work towards this goal. And to maintain the momentum generated by this meeting itself, I encourage the Government of Iraq to agree on the date and venue for the launch of the International Compact.

Thank you again for attending this meeting. I am hopeful that, through our concerted efforts, we can help to build a country at peace with itself, with its neighbours, and with the wider international community."

SRSQ Zazi briefs SC and stresses need to transform Iraq into theatre of peace and reconstruction

Calling on the Iraqi Government to do more to inspire its citizens' confidence in a promising agenda of political reforms, and urging neighbouring countries to do their part to help restore stability, the senior United Nations envoy to Iraq told the Security Council today that the war-torn country must be transformed from a theatre of conflict to a theatre of peace and reconstruction.

To re-establish an acceptable level of security in Baghdad and the wider Iraq, there must be simultaneous progress on the political front," Ashraf Qazi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for that country said in an open briefing that was also addressed by Adil Abdal Mahdi, the Vice-President of Iraq.

He said the Government of Iraq must take all necessary measures to ensure that all its citizens perceived its actions to be on their behalf and in their interest. Only then would security operations help bring the Iraqi people together. Previous plans, initiatives and statements had not resulted in tangible and sustained improvements for the long-suffering citizens, and conditions must be created for the emergence of an inclusive and participatory political process.

Describing the ever-present menace of political, sectarian and criminal violence that "reflected the grim reality of life in Iraq", he warned of the danger that would be posed by any additional conflicts in the already volatile Middle East. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had called on regional and international Powers not to use the country as a venue to wage their conflicts, and the United Nations was determined to encourage neighbouring States to develop a sustained and constructive dialogue to minimize the prospect of Iraq's tragedy being exacerbated by the wider problems of the region.

United States Ambassador Alejandro Wolff, reporting on behalf of the Multinational Force-Iraq, said that, despite the sobering scale of violent attacks, the Iraqi Government and people continued to pursue their political and economic development and security goals. Towards that end, the Council of Representatives had passed a law in January that established an Independent Higher Election Commission — a key step in preparing for provincial elections. Late last month, the Council of Ministers had approved the draft hydrocarbon law that, together with complementary legislation, would ensure national control and equitable distribution of Iraq's oil wealth.

"Improving security will require not only military means, but genuine and essential efforts to promote national reconciliation, reduce sectarian tension and improve the human rights situation. Above all it requires relieving the suffering of the Iraqi people. Dialogue within Iraq will have to lead the way, but regional and international initiatives have a key role to play. I urge you to do your part."

SG Ban Ki-Moon addressing the Arab League of States Summit in Riyadh on 28 Mar 2007

In response to the ongoing attacks in Baghdad, he said the Prime Minister Maliki had announced -- and the Council of Representatives had approved -- the Baghdad Security Plan to renew efforts by the Iraqi security forces to lead operations and secure the capital against insurgents and militias. That Plan included the commitment of elements from nine additional Iraqi army battalions to the operation. Announcing a "New Way Forward" on 10 January, United States President George W. Bush had committed an additional 21,500 troops to the Iraqi-led effort, with 4,400 committed in early March.

He said the Iraqi Government remained engaged in efforts to build positive relations with its neighbours. Over the last three months, Syria and Iraq had reopened their embassies in each other's capitals and Iraq had re-established its embassy in Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi Government had also invited Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as Bahrain, Egypt, the five permanent Security Council members and the United Nations to a meeting in Baghdad on 10 March, where all attendees had announced their support for the country's security and stability.

"The birth of a new Iraq can only happen with the support of neighbouring countries," said Mr. Adbal Madi, who is in New York ahead of an international conference tomorrow to update United Nations Member States, donors and others on the five-year plan known as the International Compact with Iraq. Bilateral and multilateral meetings over the past month had succeeded in bringing the country and its neighbours together, and had borne much fruit.

Such meetings could discourage outside interference in Iraq's domestic affairs, while proving that the country was able to help its neighbours engage in dialogue, thus helping to reduce regional tensions and prevent an upsurge in violence. For its part, Iraq's national unity Government had set its sights on re-establishing security and rebuilding the political structure and economy. Hopefully, 2007 would prove a decisive year in completing the reorganization of the Iraqi State and promoting international partnership towards the achievement of peace.

Turning to the subject of internally displaced persons, he said the Baghdad Security Plan took into account the need to guarantee their security, so they could return home. According to the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 2 million Iraqi refugees could be found in Jordan and Syria. A joint commission involving Iraq and other countries interested in resolving that problem would be created as a result of the 10 March meeting.

Iraq was fully aware of the burden borne by its two "brother countries", but hoped they would treat the refugees in accordance with international humanitarian law. Iraq also hoped those refugees would be given legal residency and other assistance, while awaiting their return home. He welcomed UNHCR's announcement of an international conference on this matter on 17 and 18 April.

SRSB Activities

SRSB Ashraf Qazi oversaw the logistical, security and briefing preparations for the Secretary-General's visit on 22 March. He accompanied the SG throughout his visit when he met Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, Deputy Prime Ministers Salam Al-Zobaie and Dr. Barham Saleh, Speaker of the Parliament Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani and a broad range of political leaders including former Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafaari, and leaders from Tawafuk, Iraqi Islamic Party, Hiwar, UIA, the Sadrist movement, Turcoman Front and Fadhila Party.

On 25 March SRSB Qazi visited Deputy Prime Minister Salam Al-Zubai'e in hospital following an assassination attempt to convey a letter from the SG wishing him a speedy recovery. He attended farewell receptions for US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad hosted by the US Embassy, Prime Minister Maliki, Dr Ahmad Chalabi and Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Barham Saleh.

Political Update

On 25 March, Shiite Cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr broke his weeklong silence and declared that Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) could protect Iraq and its people without help from any outsiders. He rescinded his support for the new security plan and renewed his call for a timetable for MNF-I withdrawal. He also appealed to both Shiite and Sunni communities to renounce sectarianism for the sake of Iraq's unity.

On 23 March, President Jalal Talabani met Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Barzani in Sulaymaniya to discuss the latest security and political developments in Iraq, as well as contentious matters such as the new oil legislation and implementation of Article 140 of Iraq's Constitution on the status of Kirkuk. Their joint press conference stated that Iran had offered to host a meeting between the KRG Prime Minister and the Turkish National Security Council. Iraq's Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi conducted a regional tour visiting Turkey and Iran. In Ankara he held talks with the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and with the Iranian Foreign Minister Manucher Mottaki in Teheran. According to official statements, discussions focused on regional stability and ending violence in Iraq.

Abdul Mahdi reportedly also urged Turkey to refrain from threatening cross-border military operations against PKK. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Salam Al-Zobai'e met in Cairo with Amr Mousa, the League of Arab States Secretary General, to discuss latest developments in Iraq, including the Security Plan.

On 23 March, MNF-I troops detained Ammar, son of UIA/SCIRI leader Abdul-Aziz Hakim on his return from Iran. After almost 12 hours in detention the US military released him, with US Ambassador Khalilzad apologizing publicly. The arrest sparked a reported 10,000-strong demonstration in Najaf.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced a reduction of British forces in the South from 7,100 to 5,500 troops over the coming months. Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and other Iraqi politicians including President Jalal Talabani welcomed this plan as vindication of ISF capability. Sunni politicians however cautioned about possible increase in Iranian interventions.

On 25 March Pakistan hosted a meeting of six Muslim countries (Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, together with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Islamabad. Iran and Syria were not invited. Participants explored new approaches to crises in the Middle East and a future Muslim leaders' summit in Mecca. The final communiqué stressed the need for a strong new initiative to reverse negative trends, as well as for national reconciliation in Iraq.

Constitutional Support Newsflash

The UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support held two workshops in Erbil on 28 and 29 March, in which Iraqi Governors and Heads of Governorate Councils as well as Kurdish political leaders and intellectuals participated. The discussions focused respectively, on constitutional aspects and challenges of Iraqi federalism relating to Governorates and Regions and, secondly, the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and constitutional issues in the North. Prior to departing for Erbil, OCS expected to finalize and deliver to the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) an initial set of three submissions, in the substantive areas of the judiciary; independent institutions; and the second chamber of the legislature. The remaining submissions, which will include substantive recommendations on federalism and fiscal federalism, as well as human rights, will be presented to the Committee following the discussions in Erbil. OCS is preparing for a period of intensive engagement with the

Constitution Review Committee (CRC) and Baghdad-based representations of the international community during the months of April and May, as the Committee develops its own recommendations to the Iraqi Council of Representatives.



UNAMI press conference on study tours organized by OCS for Iraqi MPs, Baghdad, 20 March, 2007

On 20 March 2007, the UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support (OCS) held a press briefing on Iraqi Multiparty Dialogues and OSC- organized constitutional study tours for members of the Constitution Review Committee (CRC) as part of its meet the press series. It was attended by Chairman of Foreign Affairs and Constitutional Review Committees His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Humam Hamoudi, Members of Council of Representatives and CRC: Dr. Iyyad Al-Sameaie, Mr. Abbas Al-Bayati, Dr. Haneen Qadou and Dr. Unadem Kana along with Constitutional Advisor in UNAMI Mr. Mohamed El Ghannam.

Human Rights News

Media and MNF-I reported on 21 March that a car bomb managed to pass a security checkpoint in Baghdad because two children were in the car. They were killed in the subsequent blast. On the same day, an explosion in Ramadi was caused by a bicycle- borne bomb reportedly ridden by a 14 years old. The last such incident of a child involved in a bombing incident was recorded by HRO in November 2005. Despite a call by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers to suspend the execution, former vice president Taha Yassin was hanged in Baghdad on 20 March. Attacks continued on minorities and journalists, a cause of continued concern.

HRO continued to document cases of violations committed by ISF during raid and arrest operations. HRO interviewed several Palestinian witnesses and detainees involved in the raid on the Palestinian Baladiyat compound on 13-14 March. One victim testified to beatings during his arrest and detention. He showed HRO staff traces of injuries that matched previously allegations. The victim also reported beatings by local Iraqi residents in collusion with Iraqi forces. By contrast, treatment allegedly improved

temporarily whenever MNF-I soldiers or high-ranking Iraqi officials were present. In light of the reports on physical abuse of detainees, HRO remains concerned about the continued detention of 13 Palestinians.

Mohamed Faraj, Head of Human Rights Committee in Kurdistan National Assembly, stated to HRO on 19 March in Erbil that on the occasion of Nawruz, a special committee would review the cases of those detained for up to two years and arrested without being charged. Faraj said that the committee would recommend a general amnesty for those not proven to have committed crimes and would refer other detainees to court to be processed. Also in Erbil, HRO met a judicial investigator who claimed a marked increase in the number of reported rape cases between 2003 to 2007.

Electoral Update

The second part of March coincided with the parliamentary recess resulting in no progress in the appointment of Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) commissioners. The UNAMI Electoral Office is however in the process of completing the plan for the induction of the new IHEC commissioners. In the meantime the IECI is preparing for the transfer to the IHEC. In that sense, there have been some encouraging statements from CoR members supporting the retention of IECI staff and the transfer to IHEC. Awareness has also been raised about the impact that an eviction from the current IECI HQ would have in the electoral calendar. The Electoral CTA has been holding consultations in Washington and New York concerning various elements required for any upcoming electoral processes.

UNAMI Electoral Office has continued advising CoR members and committees on possible steps to enhance the credibility of the electoral process. UNAMI Electoral Office is concerned that the absence of action will translate into a rushed process in which there will be no room for transparency or input by stakeholders other than the political parties.

Relief, Reconstruction & Development Activities

The DSRSG form Humanitarian, Reconstruction and Development Jean-Marie Fakhouri, and representatives from Clusters of the United Nations Country Team participated in the 20 March Iraq Reconstruction Forum/International Reconstruction Fund Feasibility IRFO/IRFFI Donors' Meetings in Istanbul. The first day focused upon the Iraq Reconstruction Forum, which was primarily the vehicle for Iraq to share its vision and actions with the wider donor community. The Clusters of UNCT convened side meetings for interested donors to provide more in-depth information on UNCT activities. The event provided an opportunity for tripartite discussions between the UN, donors and the governmental

representatives, led by the Iraqi Minister of Planning, on issues of common concern. It was decided that the trust fund will in future be co-chaired by the Governments of Iraq and Italy.

The office is in the process of finalizing the Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Action in Iraq. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Surge Team held consultations on the Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Action, with agencies and NGO partners. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) intends to share the final draft document with the government and donors later this week.



Iraq donors meeting in Istanbul, 19-20 March 2007

Brief from PIO

PIO coordinated with other section heads for the SG's visit to Baghdad on 22 March 2007, compiled a video and still record of the SG's visit, and transcription of the SG's statement and press conference.

On 23 March 2007, PIO issued a press release by the SRSRG condemning the assassination attempt on Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Salam Al Zubai'e, in which he also extended his condolences for those killed and injured.

Other PIO activity included organizing a media event on 20 March for the Constitutional team at the Convention Center where members of the CRO constitutional committees encountered the media and briefed the press on latest developments. The office also dispatched one of its staff to the Istanbul IRFO/IRFFI Donors' meeting to assist with media effort for the Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Action in Iraq.

PIO continued its regular daily monitoring of Iraq, regional and international media.

Photos from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Visit to Baghdad- 22 Mar 07



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