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SRSF Staffan de Mistura Paying Tribute to the victims of the Canal Hotel Bombing

UNAMI Focus Interview with the SRSF, Mr. Staffan de Mistura

UNAMI Focus: Can you provide the UNAMI Focus readers with a synopsis of your priorities, along with the things you hope to achieve, in Iraq for the upcoming year?

SRSF: Before arriving in Baghdad, the Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has indicated to me and other colleagues that he attaches a high degree of importance to UN Security Council Resolution 1770 and to the way in which the UN team should make a difference both in Baghdad and in New York.

Regarding priorities, the Secretary General was very clear, as it is part of his own philosophy, that he is result-oriented and therefore the priorities are to be identified, in line with UNSCR 1770, within the areas the UN could immediately assist with. At the request of the Iraqi government, we will focus on the priority areas they identify where we could have the added value of the UN. For instance, the first priority identified is the returning flow of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In this regard, with the concrete assistance of UNHCR, we have mobilized a UN response jointly with the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration. The second area is undoubtedly the political national dialogue.

This is an area we are keen and actively pursuing in helping all sides in Iraq to facilitate political dialogue. This could be done by facilitating the electoral, constitutional processes, and in accelerating the implementation of laws, such as the Hydrocarbon Law. These are crucial areas in which the substantive expertise of the UN could contribute to creating a feeling of trust among the various stakeholders in Iraq.

The third area is to offer the UN expertise, always at the request of Iraqi authorities, in areas where the UN has substantial experience. Examples include the issue of provincial boundaries, where the UN provided its technical expertise in other countries.

Therefore the UN should put this expertise at the disposal of the Iraqis. Another area where we have substantial competence is in Human Rights. This area is part of UNSCR 1770 and it is part of the UN mandate in the country.

These do not exclude other areas that are of great importance, such as, the International Compact for Iraq, the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, and regional dialogue through the provision, on our side, of the secretariat system on an ad hoc basis.

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The Baghdad Rehabilitation Day

14 November 2007

A development plan for Iraq is essential, given the infrastructure difficulties that citizens of this country have endured for the past several years.

As a start to this plan, senior Iraqi Government Officials announced during the Baghdad Rehabilitation Day, on 14 November 2007, that Iraq will spend \$900 million on capital projects across Baghdad. The conference was hosted by the Deputy

Prime Minister, Barham Saleh, the two Vice Presidents, Adel Abd-al-Mahdi and Tareq Al-Hashimi, Baghdad's Mayor, Saber Al-Essawi, Baghdad's Governor, Ali Muyassar, and the commander of the Baghdad Security Plan, Abboud Qunbur.



Baghdad Rehabilitation Day

To launch the initiative, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh extended an invitation to UNAMI to attend and address the conference.

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Interview with the SRSG (continued)

UNAMI Focus: With the expansion of UNAMI's mandate, and in light of the security restrictions, what are your immediate plans for facilitating the political process and for providing humanitarian assistance?

SRSG: The restrictions are unavoidably linked to the security situation in Iraq. However, we are all noticing the lull in terms of the extreme levels of violence we have seen in the past. This lull creates a window of opportunity which is fragile, but that can be taken advantage of in order to properly utilize it, both by the Iraqis in pushing ahead their own dialogue and on our side by increasing our presence, when security circumstances permit, in Baghdad, Erbil, and in Basra.

UNAMI Focus: There is talk about opening new UN offices in Iraq, particularly in Basra, is this a serious UN consideration? And if so, what are the impediments?

SRSG: The impediments are the fluctuating security conditions in Basra which in any case could certainly allow at least some UN presence on a substantial level. We currently have two UN system partners who are ready to be present there: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services)

As for other parts of the country, different security conditions prevail. For example, in Erbil, we have a more stable and secure situation that has attracted many foreign companies and NGOs. Therefore we believe that the UN system should increase its activities there. Additionally, we are present in Baghdad and generally we intend, as circumstances permit, to increase our presence.

UNAMI Focus: Assuming the responsibilities of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq is indeed challenging, what were the motivations and factors that made you decide for it?

SRSG: Three reasons were the motivating factors. The first one, as mentioned earlier, is the Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, who indicated the great deal of importance of the re-launching of UN activities in the challenging context of Iraq under UNSCR 1770. This is the test of how the UN can do its best to help the country which clearly deserves international assistance.

The second reason was a feeling of legacy left unfinished by friends and colleagues who gave their life to the UN and for Iraq in Baghdad.

And the third reason is the feeling, which may just be a feeling, that is also shared by others, that this forthcoming twelve months are going to be crucial in the history of Iraq.

The Baghdad Rehabilitation Day (continued)

The SRSG expressed his appreciation to be back in Baghdad at such an extraordinary time and reiterated UN commitments to fulfill SCR 1770, extending and expanding UNAMI's mandate in Iraq. "As a result, you will see a stronger presence of the UN and the UN Agencies in Iraq, particularly here in Baghdad, at the centre of the Government", he said.

He also praised the Government's efforts over a period of more than a year in preparation for the International Compact for Iraq, launched in May of this year, adding that "the Compact recognizes that resolving political and security challenges are a pre-requisite to the reconstruction and economic revival that the Iraqi people want and need". In his address to the participants, the SRSG also said "that is why - as the co-chairs of the Compact - the UN stands ready with all of its resources to assist the government to realize the vision. And that will include the revival of its cities for the benefit of their people". Staffan de Mistura stressed that the experience of the UN has comparative advantage to help in the strengthening of official and social institutions, as well as promoting Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

By Randa Jamal

Constitutional Support

It is anticipated that, in early January 2008, the Chair of the Constitutional Review Committee, Sheikh Humam Hammoudi, will request an additional extension of the Constitutional Review Process beyond the current deadline of 31 December 2007, in order to permit the Constitutional Review Committee to continue its deliberations for an additional six month period. At the end of this period, the Committee would submit a final report to the Iraqi Council of Representatives for approval. The Office of Constitutional Support (OCS) has continued to work closely with the Constitutional Review Committee over the past months and will continue to facilitate its deliberations throughout this process.

Together with the *UN Office for Project Services* (UNOPS) and with funding support from the *European Commission* via the

International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI), the OCS is currently developing a proposal for a study tour to Northern Ireland and India for the benefit of members of the Constitutional Review Committee, to be delivered in early 2008. The principal aim of the tour will be to permit the Committee to dialogue with public officials who are, or were, directly involved in political negotiations concerning the resolution of internal conflict and the allocation of federal resources in these jurisdictions. The objective is to further assist the Constitutional Review Committee with the identification and formulation of possible solutions to the current political impasse within the Constitutional Review Process, which extends to core issues relating to the design of the Iraqi state, including the power of the Presidency, the relative competencies of governorates and regions versus the centre, and the allocation of oil and gas revenues.

In order assist the Iraqi Parliament with the development of constitutionally-mandated legislation, the OCS has begun to engage with leading members of individual parliamentary sub-committees, including the Legal Committee, the Regions Committee, the Security and Defense Committee, and the De-ba'athification Committee. These meetings were held to obtain information on the respective work plans of the parliamentary committees and to express UNAMI's preparedness to provide technical assistance upon request. Parliamentary engagements will continue upon the resumption of Parliament following the Holiday recess. At the same time the OCS has been active in the promotion of effective coordination of advice to the Iraqi Parliament among Baghdad-based embassies and representations of the international community. The Office co-chaired the inaugural session of a multilateral roundtable on legislative assistance on 5 December 2007 and will host the next session on 16 January 2008. This forum is a joint initiative which the OCS developed with the Delegation of the European Commission and the US and UK Embassies.

Electoral Update

The UNAMI electoral team together with its partners including UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), UNOPS (United Nations Office of Project Services) and IFES (International Foundation for Elections Systems), continued its work with the *Iraq Independent High Electoral Commission* (IHEC) on a number of capacity-building activities to ensure it attains a state of electoral preparedness. The

IHEC Board of Commissioners in November attended a workshop in the Republic of Korea, hosted by the National Election Commission (NEC) to discuss electoral management issues including operational planning and how to build relationships with external stakeholders.

Voter registration is seen by UNAMI as a key step in holding free elections in Iraq. UNAMI and its partners are advising the Board of Commission on the steps necessary to form a future voter registry. To this end, UNAMI and its partner Scuola Superiore Saint'Anna are holding a workshop in early December in Amman, Jordan, to discuss operational planning and to review options for implementing voter registration processes.

In September 2007 the Board of Commission voted on the appointment of 11 of the 19 Directors of the Governorate Electoral Offices (GEO). UNAMI considers the appointment of the directors to be a fundamental step in moving the Election Commission to a state of operational readiness.

Consultations continue with Iraqi stakeholders on fundamental issues such as the election system and how to accommodate IDPs in election activities. Considerable challenges remain in preparing for future electoral events in Iraq, however, UNAMI continues to be available to advise on decisions needed to move the process forward.

Humanitarian, Development and Reconstruction Update

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees remain high on the humanitarian agenda. A key priority during the month of November was the development of a Joint Government of Iraq / United Nations Rapid Response Plan for Immediate Assistance to Iraqi Returnees that was launched on 4 December. The plan provides US\$ 11.4 million to assist some 5,000 voluntary returnee families (approx. 30,000 persons) for an initial period of three months. A longer-term policy framework is being developed to address the medium to longer term needs including providing durable solutions for returning families.

The establishment of the International Compact for Iraq (ICI) Secretariat has received a serious boost with the arrival of the consultancy firm responsible for providing Technical Assistance to the ICI Policy Planning Unit.

November marked the official end of the UNCT's "Cluster" coordination system. The new coordination structure, which shifts the UNCT's focus into Iraq, commenced on

1 December. Amman based Sector Outcomes Teams, comprising UN Agencies and NGO partners, have replaced the previous clusters. Four Policy Groups have been established in Baghdad – Essential Services, Protection, Governance, and Economic Development – to align the work of the UNCT more closely to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the work of the ICI.

The Humanitarian Coordinator has announced that the UN will officially launch a Consolidated Appeal for Iraq (CAP) at the end of January 2008. The CAP will be developed in close consultation with the Government of Iraq and with participation from UN Agencies, international and national NGOs. The appeal will be modest, targeted and will focus on immediate needs of vulnerable groups, including but not limited to IDPs and returnees. The Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has already convened an Interagency Humanitarian Working Group which will drive the CAP process.

Human Rights Update

UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) continued its monitoring activities, including visits to detention facilities and prisons in the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad. On 19 November, HRO observed trials of the Central Criminal Court of Iraq (CCCI) in Baghdad, and noted violations due to process rights, notably the extent of access by suspects to defense counsel as well as the quality of the defense. HRO continued consultations with Iraqi Government officials over a range of human rights and rule of law issues. In Erbil, HRO discussed the situation of women in Kurdistan Region and strategies to help reduce incidents of gender violence with Erbil Police Directorate officials.

HRO also met a number of NGOs, journalists and journalists' associations in November in Baghdad, Erbil and Amman. Additionally, HRO continued to follow up on a number of allegations of human rights violations, such as disappearances, excessive use of force during military operations and abuse in detention, and sought clarifications and requested action to be taken by responsible institutions of the Iraqi government.

In Amman, Jordan, HRO continued to support the Iraqi Government and NGOs with trainings. The second phase of the 12-day training of trainers (ToT) on Human Rights for Iraqi ministry officials began on 2 November and continued until 13 November with the help of UNOPS and the Tunis-based Arab Institute for Human Rights

(AIHR). The training was attended by 21 officials from the GoI and the KRG. In addition to the ToT, HRO also prepared for a 9-day training course on psychosocial and legal counseling for women to be held in Amman on 9-18 December 2007. This training mainly targets staff of Iraqi NGOs that deal with women victims of violence through their own projects and programs or through services provided by NGO-run shelters. The training will also include officials from the central and regional KRG Ministries of Human Rights as well as the Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the KRG Ministry for Anfal.



Human Rights Seminar

HRO also held a three days' seminar on the "Protection of Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism" aimed to primarily address gaps within the security system of the Kurdistan Region to effectively deal with terror threats and legal processes involving terror suspects. This seminar offered an opportunity for key mid-level to high-ranking government officials from the region to assess and review existing counter-terrorism practices and legislation to ensure compliance with UN Global Legal Framework against Terrorism, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law. The seminar, attended by 134 participants, including heads of units from the National Security Branch and Asayish, anti-terror investigators, judges of investigations and senior judges from the Ministry of Justice, prosecutors, parliamentarians and representatives from the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Human Rights, was held from 27-29 November in Erbil.

Political Affairs Update

While the challenges facing the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki are ongoing since the withdrawal of the Sadrist Trend and Tawafuq Front from his cabinet, tangible progress has been achieved in filling the vacant ministerial posts. On 29 November, Ali Al-Bahadili, the Minister of Agriculture and Salih al-Hasnawi, the Minister of Health were officially sworn in after their approval at the Council of Representatives (CoR). However, other vacancies in the cabinet remain pending amid the lack of agreement among the Sunni parties on their participation in the government.

With the government initiative to implement and impose law and order nationwide, a security operation was launched in al-Diwaniya in mid-November to improve the security situation in the governorate. Viewing the campaign as an attempt to target them, the Sadrist reacted vehemently and accused the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) of being behind the operation. However, their leadership showed a commitment to Muqtada al-Sadr's decision, in August, to suspend the Mahdi Army activities for the duration of six months as well as respecting the agreement that was signed in October by both the Sadr trend and ISCI.

ISCI leader Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim concluded a series of diplomatic tours. On 11 November, he started by visiting Iran where he met with government officials, including President Mahmoud Ahamdinejad. Prior to his visit, al-Hakim expressed hope for swift foreign troop withdrawal from Iraq, a position that he had rarely advertised previously. Subsequently, al-Hakim visited the U.S. and met with President George Bush in Washington on 27 November.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most revered Shiite religious authority in Iraq, under took another initiative towards sectarian reconciliation. About 200 Islamic scholars participated in the First National Forum of Shiite and Sunni Clerics held in al-Najaf on 27 November. This event was held under the auspices of the Grand Ayatollah. At the end of the conference, al-Sistani issued a statement stressing the similarities that both the Sunni and Shiites have in common.

With the constitutional deadline for settling disputed territories set at the end of December, lengthy discussions were held over the issue during a CoR session on 2 December. Raid Fahmi, the Chairman of the High Commission on the Implementation of Article 140 and Minister of Science and Technology, presented a detailed report on the actions of the commission thus far.

Regional and international efforts to improve the situation in Iraq are on-going. On 2-3 November, foreign ministers of Iraq's neighbouring countries, including Egypt and Bahrain, met in Istanbul. The conference was also attended by P-5 and G-8 members in addition to the European Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). A Baghdad-based mechanism, supported by the UN, was adopted on an ad-hoc basis for the current working groups. Border tensions between Northern Iraq and Turkey were

also addressed on this occasion. Consequently, on 3 November, KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) security forces began to close down offices belonging to the Kurdish party who is sympathetic to PKK.

On 26 November, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and U.S. President George Bush signed a Declaration of Principles on the Long-Term Cooperation and Friendship between the two, which is perceived by the Iraqi Government as the first step towards achieving full-fledged sovereignty which would enable them to avoid any arrangements to be made under the auspices of the UN Charter Chapter VII.

PIO Launches New Communication Strategy For 2008

In early December 2007, a new UNAMI Communication Strategy for 2008 was approved. The new Communication Strategy, is the product of the collaborative efforts of UNAMI PIO team, and envisions a wide range of activities and initiatives aimed at staying in step with the United Nations enhanced role in Iraq.

The new Communication Strategy recognizes that Iraq remains a challenging environment for the conduct of communication, public information and media programs. The most daunting task continues to be a mutually hampered accessibility with UNAMI's PIO Iraqi interlocutors. Understandably, the fluid political process, the multi-sourced violence, the polarized sectarian divisions, and the subsequent conflicting priorities impede the expected movement of communication.

For many years, the UN in Iraq has been perceived with skepticism by a large segment of the people with varying degrees, and for different reasons across the spectrum of Iraqi society. With new mandate under UNSCR 1770 which clearly highlights UN priorities for Iraq, the Mission is offered renewed opportunities to cite its credentials as a neutral body in the service of Iraq and its people and improve its image. The UNAMI PIO Communication Strategy should develop the added space provided by SCR 1770 to emphasize this new impetus, and clearly communicate its meaning for assisting Iraq more effectively. The PIO will craft its Communication strategy to stay focused on message, while maintaining appropriate flexibility to accommodate unforeseen developments, events and activities as directed by the SRSR, and coordinated with UNHQ, DPI and DPA.

The message as clearly stated in SCR 1770, calls for the SRSR and UNAMI, at the request of the Government of Iraq, to assist the Government and people of Iraq on advancing their inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation; the Independent High Electoral Commission; assist the Council of Representatives on Constitutional Review, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries; facilitating regional dialogue, including on issues of border security, energy, and refugees. When deemed propitious, SCR 1770 calls on UNAMI to assist the Government of Iraq on initial planning for the conduct of a comprehensive census; coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe, orderly, and voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons; coordinate the implementation of the International Compact with Iraq; promote the protection of Human Rights and judicial and legal reform in order to strengthen the Rule of Law in Iraq.

To this end, the PIO Communication Strategy aims to highlight the following objectives:

- Ensure that increased visibility is compatible with the mandated expansion as called for in SCR 1770, and balanced by guarded caution to accommodate security requirements.
- Ensure the mission's mandate, objectives and responsibilities are fully and widely understood.
- Promote and communicate all aspects of the mission's various components' activities to the national and international community, without inflating expectations.
- Defend and protect the mission from defamation, unjustified criticism and misinformation.
- Communicate and coordinate with UNHQ, DPI, DPA and SG Spokesperson's office to ensure commonality of message and avoid confusion or ambiguity.
- Develop realistic and achievable programs aimed at helping the capacity-building of the Iraqi media and communication counterparts in the country.
- The PIO shall improve its skills, train its staff, increase its resources, and coordinate with other substantive sections to meet the aforementioned objectives.

Finally, communication and outreach efforts regarding UNAMI's role are not only conducted within the country, but are also extended to regional and global levels. This is achieved by the role of the SRSG, his designates and authorized activities, and supported by a comprehensive PIO communication strategy, actively engaged with Iraqi and international media and target audiences.

UNAMI Focus

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On the Occasion of Eid Al Adha Al Mubarak, Christmas and the New Year, The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Wishes Everyone Blessed Holidays and Peace and Joy in the New Year, with Families, Friends and Loved Ones



بمناسبة عيد الأضحى المبارك و عيد الميلاد المجيد، تتمنى لكم بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق أعيادا سعيدة و سنة جديدة ملؤها السلام و التوفيق مع ذويكم وأصدقائكم وأحبائكم