



# UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission

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## Interview with Ms. Sandra Mitchell, Senior International Advisor to the IHEC



*Ms. Sandra Mitchell, International Advisor to the IHEC*

**Focus Q:** Can you provide UNAMI Focus readers with a synopsis on UNAMI's involvement in the preparations for elections this year in Iraq, and how is it different from the assistance UNAMI provided in 2005?

**SM:** UNAMI leads an International Electoral Assistance Team that is comprised of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the European Union (EU), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and other partners that provide technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Iraq. UNAMI also provides technical and legal assistance to the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) in election law drafting. In 2005, there were more than 50 international advisors co-located at the IHEC. Now there are between 7 and 15 on a daily basis. Advisors are placed in the key departments of

the IHEC and with the Board of Commissioners. This includes IHEC operations, logistics, security, procurement, training and procedures, public outreach, media, information technology, political party entities and the legal departments. In addition, we bring short term experts to the IHEC to provide training in highly specialized areas such as ballot design. Co-locating with IHEC is the key to UNAMI's assistance as we work side-by-side with more than 400 Iraqi counterparts. Many advisors provide trainings, mentoring, strategic development and daily trouble shooting. UNAMI also attends the Board of Commissioners' meetings where we provide advice on international standards and best practice while decisions are being made.

**Focus Q:** What are the major impediments to holding elections this year?

**SM:** The goal remains to hold elections this year although delays with passing an election law make the timeline very tight. We must have a law by the end of July if elections are to be held in December 2008. The absence of an election law has been the greatest impediment to conducting an election. The IHEC is now operationally ready for an election and is in the process of updating the voter registry - both key elements in the preparation.

**Focus Q:** How would these elections be different from the 2005 elections?

**SM:** Elections in 2008 will be completely Iraqi led and this is the big difference from the 2005 elections. Previously, the United Nations did all the procurement for the elections and provided much of the logistical and security support needed. Now IHEC, with UNAMI's help, has the capacity to manage these three critical areas. In addition, security will be provided by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) with the Multi-National Forces – Iraq (MNF-I) providing over watch. This was not the case in 2005 when the Coalition Forces provided all primary security.

**Focus Q:** Could you briefly tell the Focus the status of the voter registry process, and the allocations for minorities and women?

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**SM:** The voter registry in Iraq is based on the Public Distribution System (PDS) because it is the only national database available. For the past 10 months IHEC has been converting the PDS into a provisional voter registry and is currently conducting a 30-day public update. The Voter Registry Update consists of 565 voter registry centers throughout Iraq where Iraqis can double check that their names and data are correctly listed. Iraqis now of voting age can be added to the list, deceased persons removed and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) can be registered to vote in their place of origin, should they choose so. The update process employs more than 7,000 Iraqis who have all been trained with UNAMI assistance. Daily security arrangements for all the 565 centers are coordinated by the ISF, MNF-I, IHEC and UNAMI.

**Focus Q:** The passing of the Election Law has been a long and drawn-out process. Could you briefly explain UNAMI's efforts to break the deadlocks to move it through the CoR? What is the difference between an open list and a closed list in this regard?

**SM:** An election law is a very technical type of law which UNAMI has been working on with the CoR for the past year. UNAMI has provided numerous workshops and symposiums at Parliament on the technicalities of an election law. We have also provided numerous fact sheets and papers for members of parliament, all of which are on the UNAMI website. The question of an open or closed list has weighed heavily on parliament. Both kinds of lists are part of a party system where seats are allocated to political parties based on the proportion of votes received. If a party receives 25% of the popular vote, they will be awarded 25% of the seats on the governorate council. The difference between the two kinds of lists is that in a closed list, the political party itself decides which of its candidates will be allocated the seats won by the party. In an open list, the voter actually votes for a candidate and thus de-

termines which seats are allocated to the party's candidates.

**Focus Q:** Can you describe your role as International Advisor to the IHEC? What are the areas to which you contribute most?

**SM:** I would prefer to keep this as a team effort and not focus on Sandra - ok?

**Focus Q:** What is the current budget for IHEC and UNAMI for assisting in running elections? Is there a clear structure for dispersing budget?

**SM:** IHEC currently has a budget of US\$ 100 million for the voter registry update and governorate council elections. It is likely that the Commission will require additional funding from the government but the exact amount cannot be calculated until a final law is in place. The Iraq Trust Fund (IRFFI) has more than US\$ 30 million for election support much of which is being implemented by UNDP and UNOPS.

**Focus Q:** What are the measures set by the IHEC that will ensure transparency and a fair process without manipulating results?

**SM:** IHEC together with UNAMI is putting in place a series of safeguards to ensure that ballots cannot be forged, duplicated or reproduced. We will also put in place rigid procedures for the transportation, storage and retrieval of election materials. The best way to prevent election fraud however is through Iraqi observation of the entire process. Election fraud is committed by political parties and their supporters. Thus it is critical that political parties in Iraq instruct their staff and supporters to not commit fraud. Observation of election events (rallies, campaign speeches, etc...) and the transportation, storage on the actual election day, and counting of the ballots is the absolute best way to ensure there is no fraud. IHEC has complaint procedures in place to handle claims of fraud and UNAMI will be available to support them in investigating and deciding such matters.

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## Voter Registry's Update started on July 15, 2008

On 7 July 2008, the Iraqi High Electoral Commission (IHEC) held its first press conference to announce the inauguration of its new media office as well as the date for launching the voter registry's process.

In his opening remarks, IHEC's Chairman Mr. Faraj Al-Haydari announced that despite the difficult conditions, and following the finalization of all administrative and logistical matters, including security preparations, the Commission is ready to launch the Voter Registry's update on July 15, 2008. He also praised the work of UNAMI's electoral team in terms of their assistance and support to the IHEC, since the commission's appointment in April 2007.

Judge Al-Haydari also described IHEC's preparation for a media campaign which aims at out-reaching through mobile phones and the commission's website. The goal is to create a strong partnership between IHEC and Iraqi civil society and to ensure that Iraqis have access to information, in a timely and efficient manner, on the electoral process.

A total of 565 Voter Registry Update centers have been opened to allow Iraqis across the country to check their voter registry details in preparation for governorate council elections that will be held sometime later this year. Facilities are also available for Iraq's Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to check their details. In preparation for the process, over 7,000 voter registry officers were trained, some in registering IDPs. An additional 40,000 Iraqi citizens have received training on observation and monitoring. The Voter Registry is based on the Public Distribution System (PDS), with an estimated 17 million eligible voters.



*The IHEC Press Conference*

The United Nations International Advisor to IHEC, Ms. Sandra Mitchell acknowledged that UNAMI is leading an international team of NGOs and United Nations agencies to assist the IHEC in the voters' registry update and help with organizing the elections that will be held later this year. Ms. Mitchell also described the United Nations' involvement in capacity building and training of electoral staff, including providing assistance to hundreds of national NGOs, to launch the *Electoral Education Foundation*. She praised the high quality performance of the registration staff.

In order for governorate elections to be conducted before the end of the year, Ms. Mitchell elaborated that holding them would not be possible unless the Council of Representatives (CoR) passes the elections law before 31st of July. Additionally, Ms. Mitchell said that for several months UNAMI worked with parties, blocs and the CoR on the draft elections law, underlining that it must provide protection and representation of women in the governorate council elections.

She added, "Security planning in all the governorates where the

*elections will take place has been ongoing for many months and the coordination of security arrangements for registration and elections through Iraqi Security Forces, the Multi National Forces – Iraq, the IHEC and the United Nations has never been stronger".* Reminding the audience that over 500 political entities are registered, Ms. Mitchell emphasized the strong sign of confidence in the development of democracy, and thus she encouraged all Iraqis to visit the centers in order to update the voter registry's list in order to be able to participate in the forthcoming governorate councils' elections.

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### **Official Launch of the Electoral Education Campaign**

The *Electoral Education Forum*, a joint advisory body for electoral education, composed of 23 members representing the Independent High Election Commission (IHEC) and the civil society, has held its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in Baghdad on 8-9 July 2008. The Forum aims to create a strong partnership between the IHEC and the Iraqi civil society to ensure access of all Iraqis to timely and accurate information on the cur-

rent electoral processes.

This meeting has been the occasion for the Forum to officially launch the *Electoral Education Campaign*. The main goal of the campaign is to encourage an informed participation of eligible Iraqi citizens in the Voter Registry Update, which started on 15 July 2008, and in the Governorate elections planned for later this year.

The *Electoral Education Campaign* is implemented at the grassroots level all across the country by Governorate Electoral Education Committees, composed of Iraqi civil society organizations and representatives from the Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs). The campaign uses direct outreach methods such as workshops, seminars, public meetings, sports and cultural festivals. The Forum hopes to reach at least 180,000 Iraqi citizens through the campaign and will focus in particular on the following target groups: first-time voters, women, IDPs, disabled and minority groups. These activities will be complemented by nation-wide media-based campaigns sponsored by the IHEC.

To support the Governorate Committees involved in the campaign, the Forum has produced a *National Electoral Education Plan*, which provides guidance on priority themes, target groups and educational methods and tools to be used for raising awareness of the Iraqi people on the elections.

The *Electoral Education Campaign* is supported by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with funding coming from the Iraqi Trust Fund. The campaign also benefits from the technical advice of the International Electoral Assistance Team led by UNAMI.

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## The SRSG meets Top Officials & Community Leaders in the Kurdistan Region



*SRSG, Staffan de Mistura, with Kurdish Iraqi Intellectuals in Sulaymaniya*

During his 5-day visit to the Kurdistan Region, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq Staffan de Mistura, met with a wide range of interlocutors in Erbil as well as in Sulaymaniya, highlighting UNAMI's commitment to its mandate as provided in United Nations Security Council 1770, and the role of the mission in engaging all sides without excluding anyone. In his high profile meetings, he also emphasized the United Nations efforts in providing analysis and proposals on the issue of Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBS), and described its role as impartial and objective in facilitating and assisting with dialogue and national reconciliation in the country.

Several meetings were held with the Kurdistan Region officials, including President Masud Barazani, Vice-President Kosrat Rassoul Ali, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barazani, Iraq's First Lady Hero Talabani, Parliament Speaker and members, PUK Politburo members, as well as several ministers. The SRSG also met with community and religious leaders representing the Yazidis, Shabak, Arabs,

Kakayee, Christian Chaldo-Assyrians, Feily Kurds and Turkmens, experts, and academics.

Mr. de Mistura who was also invited to attend a press conference, provided media representatives with a detailed account on UNAMI's involvement in finding appropriate mechanisms to deal with the issue of the DIBS under United Nations expanded mandate, as outlined in Security Council Resolution 1770. The majority of the questions from the press focused on the next proposals, the methodology employed in generating conclusions, the status of Article 140 and the impact, if any, these proposals would have on it, and whether any revisions will be made to the first proposals.

In concluding his visit, Mr. de Mistura reiterated that UNAMI would continue to consult with the Government of Iraq and all stakeholders on the issue of Disputed Internal Boundaries before and after the completion of its analysis on the relevant districts, including the various approaches for the future of Kirkuk. He also described his visit as "successful and fruitful".

## Educational Reform in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

*By Randa Jamal*

The Northern Iraqi Kurdistan Region has taken significant steps to improve regional education standards. Accordingly, English language classes in early grades and promoting creative thinking in classrooms were incorporated into school curricula. The educational reform in the Kurdistan Region will be utilized as best practices for other parts of the country where there is a need for educational reform.

Asked about the implementation of educational reform, Iraq's First Lady, Mrs. Hero Talabani believes that much educational reform is still needed both in the Kurdistan Region as well as the entire country. She noted that the rotational shifts in schools could negatively impede students' ability to acquire the amount of material that is condensed into three and half hours. She compared the experience of pupils today to that she had many decades ago noting that "*there is a huge difference indeed*". "*I remain indebted to the school system in my time for all the knowledge I acquired then*", she also emphasized. Describing the current curricula, she explained that the problems of educational system are linked to the lack of schools and an old curriculum that has not sufficiently evolved to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



*A Too Large Number of Students in Each Classroom*

In particular reference to the Kurdistan Region, Mrs. Talabani applauded the educational reform, although the problem remains with

the number of schools, which enforced the shift system. She however explained that there were *“more schools built since 2003 than the entire number of schools constructed in the region between 1958 and 2003.”*



*School Children in the Kurdistan Region*

The Kurdistan Region Ministry of Education is enthusiastic about educational reform. This falls in line with the vision of the Minister of Education, Dr. Dilshad Mohammad, who said *“the new education system should develop a well balanced curriculum that will be geared towards creating a productive and skilled new generation”*. Towards this endeavor, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is proactively assisting with educational reforms in the

region. The organization is currently involved in a nation-wide US\$ 5 million-project entitled *“Rebuilding Iraqi School Curricula”*, while other parts of the country anticipate reforms similar to that in the Kurdistan Region.

In 2007, UNESCO also expanded its role and opened up an office in Erbil. The Director of Relations, Mrs. Rasheda Zaher-Draey, said that the organization will also be the first in the region, and, at the request of the Ministry of Education, will open an office within the Kurdistan Region’s Ministry of Education. UNESCO contributes to curricular rehabilitation by sharing experience, expertise, and evaluation. *“Although we are ahead in education reforms, we want to support educational capacity building and be part of the team nation-wide”*, Rasheda Zaher-Draey added. Such capacity building could include cooperative efforts between the Kurdistan Region Government and Baghdad around teacher training, cholera prevention, accelerated learning programmes and special needs.

**Subjects currently being taught in new curricula include:**

- Kurdish
- Arabic
- English
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Mathematics
- History / Geography / Social education / Civic education
- Sport
- Art / Music

Mrs. Zaher-Draey also emphasized the Ministry of Education’s partnerships with several other stakeholders, including the World Bank and UNICEF. She also shared that a US\$ 3 million *National Strategy* (still waiting for approval by the Iraqi Strategic Review Board) has been dedicated for developing a nation-wide education strategy for Iraq that will be an *“overall umbrella that would allow for differentiation in implementation but with the same over-riding goals”*.



*A Young Pupil Going Through New English Textbooks*

In addition to UNESCO, two major United Nations bodies, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), work to promote education on certain topics in primary and secondary schools. This includes a project that was implemented in October 2007, in Erbil, Sulaymaniya, Dohuk, Baghdad, Basra and other governorates that aims to educate primary and secondary school students on cholera prevention, and will run until March 2009.

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**Education Reform in the KRG includes:**

- Starting in 2005, teaching English through new Macmillan (Sun Rise) from Grade 1 Basic now reaches Grades 1-4 Basic and 7-10 Basic + prep.
- After 35 years, a new Mathematics and Science curriculum of Harcourt has been accepted from 2007 -2008 and first started with Grades 1,2,3 Basic and ongoing for this year to cover Grade 4 and 7 Basic.
- After 35 years, Social Economic curricula for Grades 10,11,12 Preparatory (Literary) changed.
- A new 3-year plan started from 2008-2009 to change Kurdish language programs with an approved standard and covers Grades 2-6 Basic.
- The plan started to change social (Literary) programs of History, Geography, Civic Education, Human Rights, Citizenship, etc... and ongoing for 4 years beginning with Grades 4,5,6 Basic.
- Preparing plan to use a new Arabic Language curriculum (incorporating Arabic as a second language)
- The new curricula encourages the use of modern teaching methods to enable children to be more analytical.
- Attempts to incorporate visual aids and CD's into the curriculum including working on a programme of teacher training.

## First National Conference to Address Displacement



Launch of the National Policy on Displacement

On 8 and 9 July, the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, in partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), held a conference to launch the *National Policy on Displacement*. This first National Conference to address displacement clearly indicated the importance the Government of Iraq and the United Nations place on the rights of the displaced population, and on their commitment to implement these rights.

More than 300 guests participated in the event, which was opened by the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Dr. Abdul Ahmad Sultan, and followed by a speech by Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Barham Saleh, who emphasized partnership and encouraged the displaced to return, given the security gains made in Iraq. Several other key Iraqi figures, including a representative from the Kurdistan Region Government, relayed speeches addressing the topic of displacement.

From the United Nations, Mr. David Shearer, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, emphasized UNAMI's supporting

role in the coordination of humanitarian assistance and reconciliation. The Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Iraq, Mr. Daniel Endres elaborated on the importance of a *National Policy* for guaranteeing the rights of displaced persons, and support provided to IDPs and refugees.

On the second day, four working groups discussed the implementation of specific parts of the *National Policy*, including assistance to and protection of IDPs; property restitution; durable solutions to displacement; and Iraqis abroad. The working groups developed recommendations, which will be included in the implemen-

tation plan for the *National Policy*.

Through its implementation at different levels, the *National Policy* can provide protection of basic rights for displaced persons. These rights include, among others, the right to participate in decision making processes; protection against arbitrary displacement; legal status and official recognition as IDPs; right to property restitution and compensation; and access to health care and job opportunities. These rights are to be guaranteed to displaced persons before, during as well as after displacement, as stipulated by the Iraqi Constitution and national and international laws.

The *National Policy* also outlines basic needs of the displaced population, and discusses different roles and responsibilities in providing access to food, shelter, health, education, water and sanitation, social protection and safety nets, including employment.

Finally, the *National Policy* will guide the Government of Iraq in allowing for the return of IDPs and refugees and in ensuring their safety and dignity, with particular emphasis on the protection of women, children and vulnerable groups from exploitation and violence.

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Participants During the Conference

## IRFFI holds its 7<sup>th</sup> Donor Committee Meeting in Baghdad

Hosted by the Iraqi government, and co-chaired by Iraq and Italy, the *International Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI)* held its seventh Donor Committee Meeting in Baghdad on 7 July 2008.

Several topics were discussed during this meeting: progress made on the implementation of IRFFI's activities, including benchmarks set in Bari, Italy, on 30 October 2007, and increased efforts towards results based monitoring and reporting. In Bari, the Donor International Community agreed that IRFFI activities should concentrate on developmental projects and programmes that will draw on monitoring evaluation and lessons learned and that will have the greatest sustainable impact. With particular emphasis made by the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, donors agreed with them in stressing that IRFFI should build on the successful outcomes achieved by the Iraqi government in facing the challenges of budget execution; support increased capacity development in line with ICI; and promote initiatives deemed necessary by the Iraqi government and the donor community. This would include increased assistance to the Iraqi Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Additionally, donor countries welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the World Bank Iraq Trust Fund (ITF) to ensure that IRFFI's activities are in line with the priorities and benchmarks set by the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) and the National Development Strategy (NDS). With this background,

donors agreed to dedicate the remaining funds to capacity development and technical and advisory services.

The donors also agreed to allocate US\$ 20 million of UNDG ITF interest funds for humanitarian assistance to support internally displaced population. They also requested that additional funds, including interest funding, should be made available to support civil society. The donor international community also welcomed the GoI's co-financing proposal, as well as its proposal to establish a *Private Sector Development and Capacity Building Thematic Working Groups* under the ICI. A progress report on that is expected at the next meeting, which should be convened during the second half of November 2008 to present the strategic plans for the remaining period of the IRFFI.

With this background, the donors reiterated the need for enhanced monitoring and evaluation of projects, and were pleased with the establishment of a *Monitoring and Evaluation Unit* within the UNDG ITF Steering Committee Support Office.

In the conclusion of the meeting, the donors recognized and appreciated the contributions of the current Chair of the Donor Committee and the Italian Government's offer

to continue chairing IRFFI until the end of 2008.

Since the establishment of IRFFI, significant changes have occurred in three main areas: the definition of Iraq's development objectives and mechanisms; the development of the Iraqi economy; the dynamics of the political and security situation. Since the Madrid Conference of 2003, the perspective of the international community's support to the reconstruction of Iraq has been changing and evolving from post-war emergency towards an industrial and economic partnership, where foreign contributions focus on technical assistance to unlock Iraq's considerable resources and on co-financing, in the framework of Iraqi ownership of strategy and definition of priorities. IRFFI was initially set to meet the challenges of reconstruction that countries endure in transitional periods. It was not established to serve as a permanent fund facility in Iraq. In this light, the donors agreed to a cut off date for their contributions to the two trust funds by 31 December 2009. They also requested that contractual commitments against approved funds will not be made beyond the end of 2010. A final timeline proposal, in a concept note form, will be presented by Executive Committee Meetings in mid-October, for closing IRFFI.

### Up to date, 25 donors have contributed over US\$ 1.8 billion to the Facility through the two co-chairs of IRFFI: the World Bank Trust Fund and the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund. These donors are:

Australia- \$47.81 million	Kuwait- \$10 million
Belgium- \$1.32 million	Luxembourg- \$2.32 million
Canada- \$90.45 million	The Netherlands-\$12.88 million
Denmark- \$12.41 million	New Zealand-\$3.37 million
European Commission- \$771.54 million	Norway- \$13.73
Finland- \$10.28 million	Qatar- \$10 million
Germany- \$10 million	The Republic of Korea- \$30 million
Greece- \$3.63 million	Spain- \$113.17 million
Iceland- \$1.50 million	Sweden- \$19.46 million
India- \$10 million	Turkey- \$11.20 million
Ireland- \$1.23 million	The United Kingdom- \$126.93 million
Italy- \$29.78 million	The United States- \$10 million
Japan- \$491.58 million	

## **UNAMI/UNOPS Roundtable on Hydrocarbon Revenue and Water Sharing**

The Office of Constitutional Support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in close collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and with funding support from the European Union (EU), presented two roundtables on the constitutional dimensions of hydrocarbon revenue and water sharing on 14-15

July 2008, at the Al-Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad.

The roundtables were convened at the request of the Constitutional Review Committee of the Iraqi Council of Representatives. Participants included members of the Constitutional Review Committee, including its chair, Sheikh Humam Hammoudi, parliament members, Iraqi government officials, as well as national and international experts in the fields of law, economics and public administration.

The roundtable discussions were focused and fruitful and gener-

ated some specific proposals for possible amendments to the constitutional text. Iraqi participants expressed their appreciation for the efforts of UNAMI, UNDP and UNOPS and requested that the UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support continues its support through the delivery of such events, aiming to assisting Iraqi parliamentarians and officials with technical issues related to the Constitutional Review Process and associated legislative initiatives.

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### **UNAMI Focus**

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