

## **Speech by SRSG, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, to the Security Council.**

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New York

The Secretary-General's report before the Security Council comes at a time when the challenges facing the Iraqi people have never appeared more daunting. As emphasized in the report,

“the time has come for [Iraq's] constitutionally elected Government and the international community to place the safety and welfare of the Iraqi people at the front and centre of all their collective efforts” (*S/2006/706, para. 69*).

The key challenge to the Government of Iraq is to develop a truly national agenda that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all Iraqis. Prime Minister Al-Maliki has laid out a range of initiatives in his National Reconciliation Plan and has taken initial steps to broaden the basis of support for his Government and to increase the effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces. The Prime Minister has included the Baghdad peace initiative in his National Reconciliation Plan, which is aimed at establishing a basis for mutual trust and protection among Baghdad's diverse communities. It is also encouraging that the Government of Iraq is seeking to establish a dialogue with those who have hitherto remained outside the political process. Those initiatives merit the widest possible support.

Ultimately, lasting improvements in security can be achieved only through negotiated solutions to complex political, economic, social and religious issues that meet the legitimate needs and interests of all Iraqis.

Although Iraq's problems have been overshadowed in recent months by crises elsewhere in the region, Iraq today has become one of the most violent conflict areas in the world. As highlighted in the report, in many parts of the country insurgent, militia and terrorist attacks, as well as gross violations of human rights, have continued to inflict untold suffering, particularly on innocent civilians, most notably women, children and minorities. The Iraqi people have every right to expect their elected leaders to reverse those worrisome trends, which could endanger the social and political fabric of the country. Given Iraq's importance and potential, its neighbours and the wider international community have a vital stake in helping Iraq become a peaceful, stable and prosperous partner, fully integrated within the region and the international community.

The International Compact with Iraq could become an important vehicle to that end. The Compact, co-chaired by the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, is an initiative for a new partnership between Iraq and the international community. Considerable preparatory work has been initiated to create an effective framework for the Compact in which the Government can develop its economic programme according to clearly defined priorities, benchmarks and commitments.

At the preparatory meeting held in Abu Dhabi on 10 September, the Government of Iraq outlined the key priorities on which to form a Compact, such as effective public resource management and economic reform in private sector development and social sector reforms. The Government of Iraq also pledged its strong commitment to tackling corruption, creating a transparent and efficient oil sector, developing a solid budgetary framework, improving governance and building and consolidating effective national institutions. The Government recognized that good governance and the resolution of security and political challenges are interlinked and are prerequisites for progress in all other areas. Participants welcomed the commitments made by the Government and pledged their support to work closely with the Government of Iraq in further developing the Compact, with the assistance of the United Nations and the World Bank.

For its part, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) remains fully committed to support and facilitate the development of the Compact and to assist in its effective implementation. As the Council is aware, the Secretary-General has taken the initiative to convene

a high-level meeting at United Nations Headquarters on 18 September which, in addition to reviewing progress in the implementation of resolution 1546 (2004), will review the development of the International Compact.

The commitments of the Government of Iraq to make urgent progress on national reconciliation, political inclusion and consensus-building, in addition to the Compact, also deserve the full support of the region and the wider international community. Fostering national reconciliation and building effective national institutions must be an Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned process. As a key priority, Iraq's elected parliament, the Council of Representatives, will need to decide on a range of legislation to make substantial parts of Iraq's Constitution operational. It must also commence a constitutionally required review process to strengthen the Constitution as a document that reflects the national consensus.

The UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support has facilitated very considerable preparatory work for a constitutional review process through arranging several multi-party dialogues between Iraqi political representatives and constitutional experts, as well as international experts and consultants on key constitutional issues. I hope that a constitutional review will be used as a vehicle to promote national dialogue and reconciliation. Far from provoking controversy, a well-prepared and managed constitutional review can create a growing repository of fundamental agreements that, if adhered to, will be a solid foundation for Iraq's developing democracy.

The members of the Council of Representatives bear a historic responsibility to pursue their constituency interests only in the framework of the national interest. Their credibility rests on the extent to which they are able to exercise their individual judgement to protect Iraq's newly established national institutions from being influenced by particular interests. In all our contacts, UNAMI has therefore emphasized that Iraq's new independent institutions must be protected by effective laws and be enabled to discharge their responsibilities independently and impartially, without fear or favour.

Similarly, good governance requires a professional and well-managed civil service. Above all, the effective and transparent delivery of public services will depend on public confidence in the competence and accountability of those charged with their implementation. The Government has initiated important reforms in key ministries following public and international concern over the activities of some of their personnel. It is to be commended for those efforts and encouraged to ensure that adequate internal oversight and professional performance maintenance mechanisms are put in place.

All of that may seem far removed from the daily realities that face so many Iraqis. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, one of the key challenges remains ensuring greater respect for human rights and the rule of law. A priority for UNAMI is to assist the Government in setting up a strong national human rights protection system by establishing an independent human rights commission, reinforcing the judiciary and the capacity of key ministries to promote and protect human rights, and by supporting non-governmental organizations and the development of a culture of human rights. Strengthening human rights and the rule of law is necessary to create solid foundations for development and reconstruction efforts. If effective remedies for present and past crimes remain elusive, more Iraqis might take the law into their own hands. Action on transitional justice will complement those efforts and help pursue with vigour the twin priorities of national reconciliation and accountability for human rights violations.

UNAMI is also providing advice to the Government on the growing problem of internal displacement, particularly with regard to shelter and assistance. The report draws attention to the fact that some 200,000 citizens have been forced to leave their homes, mainly in Baghdad, since the Samarra incident of 22 February this year. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have nearly depleted their resources earmarked for emergency humanitarian activities. Similarly, the Government is constrained in its ability to adequately respond to the situation. There is now an urgent need for new funding to meet the needs of the displaced.

Highlighting those challenges is not to deny that in a number of areas there has been measurable progress in the delivery of services. But, as the Secretary-General has stressed in his report,

“The Iraqi people and their leaders have arrived at an important crossroads: if they are able to build firm foundations for the common interest of all Iraqis, the promise of peace and prosperity will be within reach. However, if current patterns of discord and violence prevail for much longer, there is a grave danger of a breakdown of the Iraqi State, and potentially of civil war”. (*ibid.*, para. 69)

Whatever the challenges of the moment — and there are many — there is still reason for optimism. The demonstrated resilience of the Iraqi people in the face of a succession of calamities and tribulations is reason enough to know that they will not be defeated in achieving their aspirations. The best option of the international community is to prove the pessimists wrong by assisting the people and Government of Iraq in realizing their national vision.

Accordingly, the time has come to hold focused discussions on how best to assist Iraq on its way towards a stable, peaceful and prosperous State. Those discussions should be as open and inclusive as possible, to ensure win-win approaches to addressing critical issues. The Government of Iraq has already made a bold start in addressing major issues through its initiatives, programmes and outreach efforts and through security and economic reforms. The international community must seize this opportunity to provide real support for Iraq’s efforts to transform itself into a participatory and institutionalized democracy that ensures for all its people the full, secure and prosperous lives they have struggled and made sacrifices to achieve. There are few more noble endeavours to which to devote our energies and capacities.

UNAMI remains fully committed to play its part pursuant to its mandates under resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1700 (2006). I am grateful for the continued support of the Security Council for UNAMI’s role in Iraq. A strong consensus in the Council in support of the new Government of Iraq and the United Nations role remains essential. While the United Nations presence and ability to operate effectively remain severely constrained by the security environment, UNAMI is exploring how it can maximize its impact and which tasks can be prioritized. In that regard, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to Member States, from both within and outside the Multinational Force, who support the United Nations in Iraq by providing military advisers, guard forces and movement and aviation support. UNAMI will continue to stand by the people of Iraq and will make every effort to help generate tangible progress for a democratic and prosperous Iraq that is at peace with itself, its neighbours and the wider international community.