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(UNAMI)**

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FACT SHEET

IRAQ'S COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION

On 7 March 2010, Iraq will hold Council of Representatives Election in all its 18 provinces. Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) is also scheduled to take place between 5 and 7 March in 16 countries. Special Voting will take place on 4 March to accommodate special needs voting (Iraqi Security Forces, detainees, hospitals).

Security Council Resolution 1883 (2009) mandates the UN to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) on the development of processes for holding electoral activities. UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance focuses on technical advice, capacity building and institutional development of the IHEC, and on advocacy with the Council of Representatives, the Government of Iraq, civil society and political entities.

The legislative framework for the Council of Representatives Election is based on the 2005 Election Law, as amended by the Election Law passed in November 2009 and the subsequent clarification to the amendments of the Election Law passed on 6 December 2009. The proportional representation system adopted is an open list which allows voters to select one candidate from one political entity for their governorate of residence. Reserved seats for components, a women's quota and compensatory seats are also included in the electoral system which is quite complex.

UNAMI worked to build consensus within the Council of Representatives regarding key issues in the draft Election Law, such as the open list system, candidates' nomination, rules of political campaign, total number of seats, seat allocation for governorates, allocation of seats for minorities and women representation, and special remedial provisions designed for Kirkuk which were the main points of interest for the Iraqi stakeholders. Upon a request from the major political blocs, UNAMI participated in a series of political negotiations and has provided a technical opinion on possible solutions to different options that have been considered. Efforts of UNAMI focused on facilitating clarification on disputed issues and obtaining political consensus on a proposal being supported by the majority of political blocs.

Iraq is divided into 18 electoral constituencies based on governorates. Each governorate represents one electoral constituency. The Council of Representatives will be composed of 325 seats up from the 275 seats in the 2005 Election. This reflects changes in the Iraqi population.

6,529 candidates were nominated by 86 political entities. All candidates are under an obligatory vetting process with reference to their educational background, affiliation with the outlawed Ba'ath party, or conviction of crime violating honor.

Approximately 18.9 million voters have registered to vote. The IHEC will establish around 10,000 polling centers throughout Iraq. Each center consists of one or more polling stations, totaling over 50,000. Each polling station is expected to serve up to 420 voters.

To increase the participation of eligible voters, special polling centres have been identified to accommodate Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who have registered with the IHEC to vote for the governorate from which they have been displaced, as well as special voting polling stations for categories of voters who are unable to cast their ballots in regular polling stations on Election Day.

In support of the OCV Operation that will take place in 16 countries (Syria, Jordan, UK, Sweden, Germany, UAE, Australia, Lebanon, Iran, USA, Austria, Canada, Egypt, Netherlands, Denmark and Turkey), IHEC Country Office Managers have been deployed to these countries, to support the preparation and implementation of the OCV operation. Deployment of UN technical advisors in the established OCV offices is ongoing. Additionally, the OCV is to be treated the same as in-country, with votes counted against the governorate from which a voter originates.

A Voter Registration Update was conducted in August and September 2009 to give voters the opportunity to check/correct details on the Voter List. More than 574,000 voters requested services and over 935,000 visited voter registration centers for checking purposes.

An estimated 300,000 political agents and national observers are expected to participate in the election (voting, count centers and data/tabulation centers), which should provide for every polling station in Iraq to be observed. Such staff has been selected by a public electronic lottery based on more than 500,000 applications.

A nation-wide training cascade on polling and counting procedures was successfully launched on 18 January.

As part of UNAMI's confidence building activities teams of UNAMI political staff will watch the polling process across the country.

More than 80 international organizations and diplomatic missions have been invited to observe the election although few have yet given firm commitments.

IHEC public outreach and voter education is conducted in up to 5 languages (Arabic, Kurdish, Turkoman and Assyrian) and will include TV and Radio campaigns, news papers campaigns, large scale material and direct outreach to voters, call centers and websites.

More than 3,000 land convoys and more than 20 international flights are planned to provide logistical support for the movement of electoral materials, with a completely integrated security plan designed by the Election Supreme Security Committee, established by Iraq's Prime Minister. Overall, more than 26 million ballots of 19 different types will be printed to accommodate regular voting, special needs and absentee voting, and 100,000 ballot boxes will be distributed in polling centers.

For additional information, visit UNAMI website: www.uniraq.org