

**Speech of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq,
Mr. Ad Melkert, to the Security Council
16 February 2010**

Mr. President,

It is a significant moment to brief the Council on developments and prospects in Iraq. When I spoke here three months ago, the electoral law that had just been adopted by the Council of Representatives after a complicated set of negotiations, was vetoed by Vice-President Hashemi. This set in motion another range of deliberations that eventually were concluded with an amended law with stronger and broader support than the first version. This was very much constitutional democracy in action, with the UN in a position to respond to the calls from the wide spectrum of representatives to assist in building bridges towards consensus. It was an important moment for Iraq to rally broad support behind the 7th of March election date, which will mark the transition from the first full term of a democratically elected parliament to a next term.

There are still forces against this national agreement that seek to interfere violently in the reconstruction and reconciliation processes that the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people would like to succeed. Whilst regrettably these forces continue to kill and target innocent pilgrims, public servants, police officers and election candidates; they cannot reverse the progress that is taking place in Iraq. The determination of Iraqis to resist the return of the perils of the past is real and strong, stronger than the heinous forces behind the attacks. However, more international attention and engagement is needed for allowing the people of Iraq to determine their future in their own way.

I Elections and transition in perspective

Allow me to share some thoughts on the forthcoming elections and the transition to the next parliament and government.

First, I would like to caution against persistent skepticism and impatience that characterizes much of the discourse and reporting on Iraq. Yes, it is not difficult to note imperfections, gaps and contradictions in the ongoing process. But that is not the heart of the matter if one considers decades of conflicts and crimes that have gravely affected Iraq's society, economy, administration and international standing. The crux is now to see whether there is a genuine effort underway to reconstruct and innovate. This is what in many different ways is happening and deserves to be seen and properly understood, unprecedented as it is on the axe of a long and distinguished history.

Second, it is important that lessons be learned in the process and properly applied in the future in order to minimize the re-emergence of contentious issues. From UNAMI's perspective it will be highly relevant to advise the new government on the general

fundamentals of electoral legislation and parliamentary procedures, as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities of the “three powers”, as this is necessary to strengthen the authority of the institutions.

Third, there has been much attention to the “debaathification” of candidates for the elections. It should be noted that the principle to draw a line between a former dictatorial regime and a newly developing democratic order has been seen at other places. The application of the principle is entirely an Iraqi responsibility. What has made matters complex however from the angle of general international standards for preparing free and fair elections is the lack of transparency that has marked the process from the outset. UNAMI has consistently emphasized the due process requirements and abstained from judging the outcomes. Whilst reason for concern has remained, in their impact the decisions on the candidate lists should be assessed in the context of the electoral process as a whole. What eventually will matter most is the acceptance by the Iraqi people of the election result. We will continue our utmost to advice and remind all stakeholders to respect fundamental standards and to strive for consensus building in reconciling the polarized past with a more harmonious future.

A fourth, different, point of preparing for the transition has been the adoption of the budget. It is expected that this will allow for short term support commitments by the IMF and World Bank, in order to deal with the setback of oil price decrease during the past few years. However, transforming the budget into a strategic instrument of prioritizing and directing expenditures and investments remains a big task ahead. The integrated UN Mission is preparing its advice and support to the new government and is doing so in seeking closer cooperation with in particular the World Bank. It is hoped that all will step up the plate: Iraq needs less projects and more strategic advice; it needs to be connected to global standards of governance that will be of great benefit to the business climate; and it should urgently respond to the social deficits that squarely put the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals high on the agenda, as a moral imperative and as an economic necessity as the skills of its workers will define whether and when Iraq can live up to its full potential.

Fifth. Full transparency and combating corruption in revitalizing the oil industry would be of major impact to the future and it will improve investors’ confidence. It should be welcomed that Kurdistan Region’s Prime Minister Saleh has taken the initiative to address the issue of transparency with regard to the contracts signed by the Kurdistan Regional Government. It is an indispensable aspect of transition towards a more stable future that competences between the federal and the regional government will be clarified. At the same time with the successful conclusion of important oil contracts the urgency has returned to the stage of avoiding the pitfalls of monoproduction and quick win exploitation of resources. After all stability and prosperity are both closely intertwined.

II UN support to elections and transition

Mr. President,

I would like to say a few words on the role of the United Nations in the important priority areas.

7th March Preparations

Elections is not only about politics but requires a lot of hard work on the ground. The UN electoral team has continued to play a key role in advising and technically support the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). As a result of a huge collective effort the infrastructure is in place in order to allow approximately 18.9 million Iraqi voters to visit 48,000 polling stations on election day. Preparations are also under way for out of country voting ongoing in 16 countries that host large Iraqi communities in diaspora.¹

Security is of vital consideration for these elections, both in relation to the integrity of the process and voter confidence. The Government of Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces have the lead in this important area.

Furthermore, observation of the electoral process plays a pivotal role in ensuring credibility and oversight of the election. The UN is playing an active role in assisting civil society to assume this role through the funding of an initiative that has trained over 29,000 domestic observers. International observers are being coordinated through the good offices of the European Union in cooperation with IHEC. Although UNAMI will not observe the elections due to its role of supporting IHEC, the mission will undertake its own poll watching activities, sending teams to different locations in the country as a confidence building initiative.

Acceptance of results is of paramount importance, and will be the litmus test for the success or failure of the process. UNAMI is supporting IHEC in developing a robust and timely complaints mechanism to ensure the credibility of the results is not eroded by a delay in adjudication of complaints. While it is expected that preliminary results will be published in the days following 7 March, final results could take considerable time, with the Federal Supreme Court certifying the election results once all appeals have been resolved.

National Coexistence Agenda

For the near future cementing long term stability between the federal state of Iraq and the Kurdish region is of paramount importance. Different signs of goodwill, including on joint security arrangements, seem to signal potential for further progress.

¹ Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Netherlands, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, UAE, UK, USA

In the High Level Task Force that has continued to meet under UNAMI auspices progress has been made to address issues that stand in the way of normal life and business in disputed areas, including property matters. I recently traveled to Kirkuk to support the work of the Kirkuk Property Committee in their inaugural sitting. In my visit to local multi-ethnic communities I got a strong impression that daily issues are the same for all communities and much of the discussion on boundaries and competences is considered “higher politics”, not necessarily connected with the practical concerns of living together of the average citizen. This should hopefully serve as reminder and inspiration for the inevitable “high” political dialogue that is ahead of us. UNAMI intends to interact with key representatives of the different communities in order to encourage progress on outstanding questions that are fundamental for security, stability and economic and social progress in Iraq as a whole. The coexistence agenda and the process towards solutions will have to be decided by the Iraqi parties themselves. The UN is ready to facilitate these steps at the request of parties. I have observed growing consensus that the time has come to address the administrative arrangements for Kirkuk and other areas and to ensure long term agreements on revenue-sharing and security provision.

Chapter VII mandates

A next post-election priority will be the endeavor to promote constructive neighborhood relations between Iraq and Kuwait, in conclusion of a period of turbulence. My visit to Kuwait in January and the consultations with the Government of Iraq prior to the visit were intended to get a first-hand impression on the positions of the two sides. I was pleased with the keen interest demonstrated by my interlocutors on both sides in resolving all outstanding issues in the period ahead. This would be an important step in the Council’s deliberations on resolution 1859 and hopefully pave the way for a new era in the relationship between Iraq and the UN.

Policy Agenda and Development Assistance

With a new government starting its work in the course of the year there is an opportunity for the UN to transform its support to primarily humanitarian tasks into a more development and policy reform oriented advisory role. “Integration” will be the name of the game of the UN contributions. The UN family in Iraq has identified four key areas where the UN has specialized knowledge and demonstrated experience:

- 1) Post election activities including census and civil registration;
- 2) Broader engagement in the “disputed internal boundaries” areas in the context of local area economic and social development;
- 3) Reform of the public distribution system and the development of social safety nets;
- 4) Water resources management and relevant issues of trans-border cooperation.

We are also in the final stages of producing the first UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Iraq for the period 2011-14, prepared in close consultation with the Government of Iraq, and concurrently with the preparation of the Iraq National

Development Plan (NDP). The agencies, funds and programmes also discussed practical measures to ensure the UNDAF will be fully funded particularly in light of the closure of the Iraq Trust Fund from the 30th June this year.

UN future presence in Iraq

This brings me at a point that I would like to draw your attention to in anticipation of a more specific analysis on the next reporting occasion. With its National Development Plan the Government of Iraq counts on enlarged support by the UN, increasingly operating from and in the country. Against the backdrop of the drawdown of USF-I security and logistical support, there will be considerable implications for the way that the UN can organize itself to respond to future demand for presence and programs. In close cooperation with the UN Headquarters, we are currently exploring the arrangements for the future. Continued presence, let alone increasing the UN footprint in different parts of Iraq, will come with a higher price tag. For the plans of the new government and for our own operational preparation it will be important to count on your attention and guidance.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my gratitude towards the men and women that in still difficult circumstances continue to keep the UN flag and spirit high. It is a privilege to work with this truly international community in assistance of the people of Iraq. I was happy to recently welcome as the new DSRSG for Political Affairs, Jerzy Skuratowicz (Poland), who in many places in the world has proven to be another true UN ambassador. In leading the mission together with him and DSRSG for Development Christine McNab I look forward to your ongoing guidance and support.

Thank you, Mr. President