

Kingdom of Belgium

Statement by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Ambassador, Permanent Representative

At the United Nations Security Council

Security Council Meeting

**United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by
Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant**

New York, 15 July 2019

Mr President,

First of all, I would like to thank the Special Adviser Mr. Karim Khan for his written report, and also for his highly informative briefing which he has just presented to the Council.

Mr President,

Stability in Iraq, in a context that remains challenging from a security perspective given the significant threat that Da'esh continues to pose, is more than ever our priority. In order to rebuild a resilient society on a solid basis, Belgium is convinced that it is crucial to combat impunity for the atrocious crimes committed there.

Da'esh is one of the main perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law that have taken place in Iraq. That is why, in September 2016, Belgium organised, alongside the United Kingdom in particular, a high-level ministerial event to initiate a reflection on the best way to criminally prosecute these appalling crimes.

It is in this context that Belgium co-sponsored resolution 2379 establishing the Investigative Team. At this time, the Council played its role in ensuring that the necessary measures were taken to combat impunity and promote respect for international law, two aims that help promote the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr President,

Belgium would like to commend the work of Mr. Khan since he took office almost a year ago. We welcome the excellent cooperation with local authorities as underscored during the Council's recent field mission to Iraq, as well as the contacts established with all components of Iraqi society to foster collective support for the Investigative Team. The work carried out to operationalise this, the initial activities of collecting and analysing evidence, and the discussions on the support that might be provided as regards national proceedings, are very encouraging.

We also note with interest the consultations held with the Iraqi authorities on how best to incorporate war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide into domestic law, as well as on the possible establishment of specialised bodies to prosecute the perpetrators. This is in line with the efforts made by Belgium and other European countries to explore the viability of the various possible avenues of international cooperation to try foreign terrorist fighters.

My country would like to express its full confidence in the ability of Mr. Khan and his team to rigorously carry out their mandate. I would like to underscore two points that are important for us. First, during evidence sharing, the Investigative Team will ensure that, as an independent and impartial United Nations mechanism, it complies with United Nations policies and good practices, as well as international law. The aim here is to dovetail with the established practice of the international tribunals and mechanisms established by the United Nations, whether in terms of procedural guarantees, the protection of victims and witnesses or the non-imposition of the death penalty.

Furthermore, in the context of capacity-building regarding the application of international standards and best practices in the area of justice, it is important that all perpetrators of crimes, regardless of their affiliation, are held accountable before Iraqi courts and tribunals. To this end, Belgium will examine, along the lines of Resolution 2379, how it could possibly share its expertise and provide the Iraqi government with the necessary assistance.

Mr President,

It is in light of these different objectives that Belgium will continue to monitor the work of the Investigative Team particularly closely during its mandate on the Security Council. This mechanism is a source of immense hope for the many victims, and it is our duty not to disappoint them.

Thank you.