

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

to the UN Security Council

New York, 21 May 2019

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Mr President,

Belgium would first like to thank Ms Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing in her capacity as Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We are pleased that the Council unanimously renewed UNAMI's mandate and we fully support this important mission.

Iraq is at a decisive moment. Much progress has been made, but many challenges remain, in a context that remains difficult in terms of security given the significant threat that Islamic State continues to pose.

First of all, Belgium supports the **rapid finalisation of the formation of a federal government**. We encourage the various parties to support a common vision for the country and to show a spirit of compromise. In this particular context, the establishment of strong State institutions is essential in order to better meet the challenges.

We support the Iraqi government in its **reconstruction**, economic development and reform efforts aimed at encouraging private sector participation. We welcome the Iraqi Government's strong commitment to the fight against corruption. But economic reconstruction alone will not be enough. We commend the Government for its work with the international community on the removal of ordnance and explosive devices, to enable stabilization and reconstruction activities to continue, and families to return to their communities and resume their lives. Moreover, at a time when Iraq must look to the future, **reconciliation** is of paramount importance. This can only be achieved through the involvement of all sectors of Iraqi society and the various communities.

We support UNAMI's important mission to promote justice, the protection of human rights, judicial and legal reforms and the strengthening of child protection. We encourage the Iraqi government to pay more attention to the right of all detainees to a fair trial, especially children and minors.

We also encourage the Iraqi government to finalize an action plan on **children and armed conflict**, with the support of UNAMI and the United Nations country team who are already working towards this goal.

Finally, we support Iraq's efforts to open up to neighbouring countries, with a view to strengthening bilateral and regional relations based on the fundamental principles of respect for sovereign equality and territorial integrity.

Thank you.