



Kingdom of Belgium

Speech by Mrs Karen Van Vlierberge, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative

UN Security Council  
UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI)

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Madam President,

I would first like to start by thanking Ms Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing in her capacity as Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).

Madam President,

The new Iraqi government has made holding early elections one of its main priorities. We welcome all the efforts made by the political actors to ensure that the elections on 6 June will be credible, fair, free and inclusive. We take note of the progress made in recent months, in particular the recent signing of the electoral framework by President Salih. We welcome the commitment of UNAMI to provide electoral assistance to the government of Iraq and to also extend electoral assistance with the ECHI (in accordance with its mandate). The organisation of free, fair and inclusive elections can open the way for a more stable and democratic situation in Iraq. In this regard, Belgium wishes to underscore the importance of full, active and meaningful participation of women.

Madam President,

When Belgium joined this Council two years ago, Iraq was already at a crossroads. The political, economic and security challenges remain dramatic. To this end, there is an urgent need to make tangible progress at these different levels. There needs to be strong, political leadership. Belgium, as a Member of the European Union, remains committed to helping and overcoming the various challenges.

Firstly, the Iraqi economy remains highly dependent on oil exports. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated an already disastrous economic situation. We support the Iraqi government in its efforts to diversify and support economic development, to develop the private sector, implement administrative reforms and fight corruption. We welcome the recent adoption of the White Paper by the Council of Ministers.

Secondly, human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected at all times. The progress made by the government with regard to compensating victims of violence committed during demonstrations since October 2019 is positive. However, we call on the Government to continue to support the most vulnerable, notably internally displaced persons. Any closure of camps must be preceded with sufficient notice and carried out in full consultation with representatives of the displaced and humanitarian organisations. The return of displaced persons must be done in a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable manner. We call upon the Iraqi government to work in close cooperation with international partners, including UN agencies. The distribution of humanitarian aid must always be done while fully respecting humanitarian principles.

Thirdly, my country encourages the parties to implement the Sinjar agreement, which was facilitated by UNAMI. Although a number of questions remain, this will be an important test for

strengthening mutual trust. We call on the parties to build upon on this momentum in order to resolve other outstanding issues, including discussions underway with regard to oil revenues. The Iraqi people deserve a political consensus to resolve the economic impact of Covid-19.

Fourthly, we note with concern that, despite the military defeat of Da'esh in Iraq, the group continues to operate as a clandestine network and to carry out attacks. We renew our commitment to counter terrorism as part of the international coalition against Da'esh, in collaboration with the Iraqi government. We are concerned about the continuing violence, including the rocket attacks against the Green Zone last week, which was claimed by the militia Ashab al-Kahfby. We encourage the government of Iraq to continue to reform the security sector. Non-State armed actors must not be able to operate beyond the control of the State.

Moreover, as Iraq opens up to its neighbours in order to strengthen bilateral and regional relations, the fundamental principles of respect for sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity must be respected.

Finally, Madam President,

Iraqi children deserve to have a future. They deserve to live in safety and prosperity. My country would like to underscore, once again, our support for the Government of Iraq, with regard to these many outstanding challenges.